DICK MERRIWELL'S PRANKS

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DICK MERRIWELL'S PRANKS

OR,

LIVELY TIMES IN THE ORIENT

BY

BURT L. STANDISH

Author of the celebrated "Merriwell" stories, which are the favorite reading of over half a million up-to-date American boys. Catalogue sent free upon request.

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Dick Merriwell's Pranks

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CHAPTER I—IN THE BOSPORUS

The steamer had crossed the Sea of Marmora and entered the Bosporus. It was approaching Constantinople. On the right lay Asia, on the left Europe. Either shore was lined with beautiful mosques and palaces, the fairylike towers and minarets gleaming in the sunshine.

The deck was crowded with people eagerly gazing on the bewitching scene. From that point of view it was a land of enchantment, strange, mysterious, fascinating. Shipping from all quarters of the globe lay in the splendid harbor.

Among the crowd on deck were two boys who were making a European tour in charge of Professor Zenas Gunn, of the Fardale Military Academy, from which one of the students had been unjustly expelled. This was Dick Merriwell, the younger brother of the former great Yale athlete and scholar, Frank Merriwell.

With Dick was his chum and former roommate at Fardale, Bradley Buckhart, of Texas.

"What do you think of it, Brad?" asked Dick, placing a hand on the shoulder of his comrade, who was leaning on the rail and staring at the bewildering panorama.

Buckhart drew a deep breath.

"Pard," he answered, "she beats my dreams a whole lot. I certain didn't allow that the country of the 'unspeakable Turk' could be half as beautiful."

"Wait until we get on shore before you form an opinion," laughed Dick. "It certainly is beautiful from here, but I have reasons to believe that things will not seem so beautiful on closer inspection."

"Then I opine I don't care to land!" exclaimed Brad. "I'd like to remember her just as she looks now."

"Hum! ha!" broke in another voice. "I don't blame you, my boy. Isn't she beautiful! Isn't she wonderful! Isn't she ravishing!"

"All of that, professor," agreed the Texan.

Professor Gunn, who had joined them, readjusted his spectacles and thrust

his hand into the bosom of his coat.

"I have admired her for a long time," he declared. "In fact, ever since my eyes first beheld her intellectual and classic countenance. Her hair is a golden halo."

"Eh?" grunted Buckhart, in surprise.

"Hair?" exclaimed Dick, puzzled.

"Her eyes are like limpid lakes," continued Zenas.

"Eyes?" gasped both boys.

"Her mouth is a well of wisdom."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Dick.

"Her teeth," went on the professor—"her teeth are pearls beyond price."

"Is he daffy?" muttered the Texan.

"And her form has all the grace of a gazelle. She is a dream of enchantment. Every movement is a poem. I could worship her! I could spend my life at the feet of such a woman listening to the musical murmur of her heavenly voice."

"Look here, professor," said Dick, "what is the matter with you?"

"I'm enthralled, enchanted, enraptured by that woman."

"What woman?"

"Why, the one we are talking about, Sarah Ann Ketchum, president of the Foreign Humanitarian Society, of Boston, Massachusetts. Who else could I be talking about?"

"Oh, murder!" exploded Brad. "Wouldn't that freeze you some!"

Both boys laughed heartily, much to the displeasure of the professor.

"Such uncalled-for mirth is unseemly," he declared. "I don't like it. It offends me very much. Besides, she may see you laughing, and that would harrow her sensitive soul."

"Professor, I didn't think it of you!" said Dick, trying to check his merriment. "You are smashed on the lady from Boston—and you're married. Have you forgotten that?"

"Alas, no! I can never forget it! But do not use such vulgar and offensive language. 'Smashed!' Shocking! You do not understand me. She is my ideal, my affinity, the soul of my soul! Yet I must worship her from afar; for, as you say, I am a married man. I have talked with her; I have heard the music of her voice; I have listened to the pearls of wisdom which dropped from her sweet lips. But I haven't told her I am married. It wasn't necessary. Even if I were to know her better, even if I were to become her friend, being a man of honor, that friendship would be purely platonic."

"Rats!" said Brad. "You're sure in a bad way, professor. Why, that old lady with the hatchet face would scare a dog into a fit."

"Bradley!" exclaimed Zenas indignantly. "How dare you speak of Miss

Ketchum in such a manner! She is a lofty-minded, angelic girl."

"Girl!" gasped Dick. "Oh, professor! Girl! Oh, ha, ha, ha! She's sixty if she's a minute!"

"Sixty-five!" asserted Brad, slapping his thigh and joining in the merriment.

"Stop it!" spluttered the old pedagogue. "She's looking this way now! She'll see you laughing. She's had trouble enough with that little, dried-up, old duffer from Mississippi, who has followed her about like a puppy dog."

"You mean Major Mowbry Fitts?" said Dick.

"Fitts—that's the man. They're all majors or colonels down in Mississippi. He's no more a major than I am a general."

"But he's a fire eater," declared Dick. "He is a very dangerous man, professor, and you want to be careful. He's fearfully jealous of Miss Ketchum, too. Followed her all the way from the United States, they say. I've seen him glaring at you in a manner that has caused my blood to run cold."

"Let him glare! Who's afraid of that withered runt! Why, I could take him over my knee and spank him. I'd enjoy doing it, too! What is he thinking of? How can he fancy such a superbly beautiful woman as Miss Ketchum could fancy him, even for a moment! Besides, he is a drinking man, and Miss Ketchum is a prohibitionist. She told me so herself."

"Be careful that she doesn't smell your breath after you take your medicine, professor," advised Dick. "But I suppose there is no danger of that now, for the voyage is practically ended."

"Yes," sighed Zenas. "We soon must part, but I shall always carry her image in my heart."

"This certain is the worst case I've struck in a long while," said Brad.

"She comes!" breathed Zenas, in sudden excitement. "She comes this way! Behave yourselves, boys! Be young gentlemen. Don't cause me to blush for your manners."

Miss Sarah Ann Ketchum, tall, angular, and painfully plain, came stalking along the deck, peering through her gold-rimmed spectacles, which were perched on the extreme elevation of her camel-back nose.

"Steady, Brad!" warned Dick. "Keep your face straight."

Miss Ketchum had her eye on the professor; he had his eye on her. She smiled and bowed; he doffed his hat and scraped. Like a prancing colt he advanced to meet her.

"Does not this panoramic spectacle of the Orient arouse within your innermost depths unspeakable emotions, both ecstatic and execrable, Professor Gunn?" asked the lady from Boston. "As you gaze on these shores can you not feel your quivering inner self writhing with the shocking realization of the innumerable excruciating horrors which have stained the shuddering years during which the

power of the Turk has been supreme in this sanguine land? Do you not hear within the citadel of your soul a clarion call to duty?

"Are you not oppressed by an intense and all-controlling yearning to do something for the poor, downtrodden Armenians who have been mercilessly ground beneath the iron heel of these heartless hordes of the sultan? I know you do! I have seen it in your countenance, molded by noble and lofty thoughts and towering and exalted ambitions, which lift you to sublime heights far above the swarming multitudes of common earthy clay. Have I not stated your attitude on this stupendous subject to the infinitesimal fraction of a mathematical certainty, professor?"

"Indeed you have, Miss Ketchum!" exclaimed Zenas.

"Oh, wow!" gasped Buckhart, leaning weakly on the rail. "Did you hear that flow of hot air, Dick?"

"I did," said Dick, concealing a smile behind his hand. "That sort of Bostonese has carried the old boy off his feet. Brad, the professor has lost his head over the lady from Boston, and it is up to you and me to rescue him from the peril that threatens him. He is in danger, and we must not falter."

The steamer was swinging in to her mooring, but Professor Gunn was now too absorbed in Miss Ketchum and her talk to tell the boys anything about the two cities, that of the "Infidel" and that of the "Faithful," which lay before them.

A man with a decidedly Oriental cast of countenance, but who wore English-made clothes, paused near the professor and Miss Ketchum, seemingly watching the boats which were swarming off to the steamer.

"Look, pard," whispered Buckhart. "There's the inquisitive gent who has bothered us so much—the one we found in our stateroom one day. He's listening now to the professor and the Boston woman. I'll bet my life on it."

"I see him," said Dick, yet without turning his head. "Brad, the man is spying on us."

"I certain reckon so, and I'm a whole lot sorry we let him off without thumping him up when we found him in our stateroom."

"He protested that he got in there by accident."

"And lied like the Turk that he is!" muttered the Texan. "I'd give a whole bunch of steers to know what his name is."

"He's up to something. I found his name on the list of passengers."

"What is it?"

"Aziz Achmet."

"I knew he was an onery full-blooded Turk. His cognomen proves it."

"He's a subject of the sultan, beyond question. Something tells me we are going to have trouble with that man."

"Well, he wants to lay his trail clear of mine," growled Buckhart. "I'm getting

a heap impatient with him, and I'll be liable to do him damage if he provokes me further by his sneaking style."

A little man with a very fierce, gray mustache and imperial came dodging hither and thither amid the passengers, caught sight of Miss Ketchum, hastened forward, doffed his military hat, and made a sweeping bow.

"Madam," he said, "it will affo'd me great pleasure to see yo' safely on shore."

"My dear Major Fitts," said Sarah Ann, "I am truly grateful for your gallant thoughtfulness. Professor, permit me to introduce you to Major Mowbry Fitts, of Natchez, Mississippi. Major, this is Professor Zenas Gunn, principal of Fardale Military Academy, a very famous school."

"Haw!" said Professor Gunn, bowing stiffly.

"Ha!" said Major Fitts, in his most icy manner.

Then they glared at each other.

"Your solicitude for Miss Ketchum was quite needless, sir," declared Zenas. "I am quite capable of looking out for her."

"Suh, yo' may relieve yo'self of any trouble, suh," retorted the man from Natchez.

"I couldn't think of it, sir, not for a moment, sir," shot back the professor. "It might be trouble for you, sir, but it is a pleasure for me."

"The old boy is there with the goods," chuckled Brad.

But Major Fitts was not to be rebuffed in such a manner.

"Considering your age and your physical infirmities, suh," he said, "I think Miss Ketchum will excuse yo'."

That was too much for Zenas.

"My age, sir!" he rasped, lifting his cane. "Why, you antiquated old fossil, I'm ten years younger than you! My infirmities, sir! You rheumatic, malaria-sapped back number, I'm the picture of robust, bounding health beside you!"

"Gentlemen!" gasped Sarah Ann, in astonishment and dismay.

"Don't yo' dare threaten me with your cane, suh!" fumed the major. "If yo' do, suh, I'll take it away from yo' and throw it overbo'd, and yo' need it to suppo't your tottering footsteps, suh."

"I dare you to touch it, sir!" challenged the irascible old pedagogue, shaking the stick at the major's nose.

Fitts made a grab, caught the cane, snatched it away, and sent it spinning overboard.

A moment later Zenas grappled with the man from Natchez, doing it so suddenly that the major was taken off his guard and sent flat upon his back on the deck, his assailant coming down heavily upon him.

Miss Ketchum screamed and fled.

In a moment Dick had the professor by the collar on one side while Brad

grasped him by the collar on the other side. They dragged him off and stood him on his feet, although he vigorously objected and tried to maintain his hold on the other man.

"Here, here, professor!" exclaimed Merriwell; "you are disgracing yourself by your behavior."

"He threw my cane overboard, the insolent, old, pug-faced sinner!" raged Zenas. "I'll take its value out of his hide!"

The other passengers in the vicinity were looking on in mingled wonder and enjoyment, many of them being aware of the cause of the encounter between the two old chaps.

"See the kind of a scrape your foolish infatuation for the woman from Boston has led you into," said Dick, in the ear of the professor. "Brace up! The passengers are laughing at you."

Brad had assisted Major Fitts to rise. The little man was pale, and his eyes glared. He stood on his toes before Zenas, at whom he shook his fist, panting:

"Suh, this is not the end of this affair, suh! Give me your address in Constantinople, suh, that I may have a friend wait on yo'. This outrage shall be avenged in blood, suh!"

Dick was between them. He turned to the major.

"You have both made yourselves ridiculous," he said. "It shall go no further. If you are not ashamed, I am ashamed for you."

"I demand satisfaction!" palpitated Fitts. "I am from Mississippi, and no man can give me an insult and escape without meeting me in a duel."

"The gentleman is quite right," said the soft voice of Aziz Achmet, as the Turk stepped forward. "Under the circumstances the affair must be settled in a manner that will satisfy his wounded honor. If he needs a friend, I shall take pleasure in representing him."

"Thank yo', suh," said the major. "I accept your generous offer, suh, and appreciate it."

"Wants a duel, does he?" cried Zenas. "Well, he can't frighten me that way! I'll go him!"

"And I shall take great pleasure, suh, in shooting yo' through the heart," declared Fitts. "Yo' will make the eleventh to my credit, suh."

The mooring being completed, a great gang of men swarmed on board and took the steamer by storm. They were a struggling, snarling, shouting pack of Greeks, Armenians, Turks, Jews, and Italians, who literally fell on the bewildered passengers, as if seeking to rend them limb from limb. They raged, and shouted, and pushed, and in this confusion Dick and Brad managed to hustle the professor away, Fitts and Aziz Achmet being lost in the throng.

"Come now," said Dick, "let's get on shore in a hurry and see if we can't

keep clear of Major Mowbry Fitts, unless you are anxious to get yourself carved up or shot full of lead. He means business, and he really wants to fight you in a duel. You were in a nasty scrape, professor."

"But my honor——" began Zenas.

"Was satisfied when you floored him handsomely before all the passengers. Let it go at that."

They found their baggage, and then Dick selected, amid the howling mass of human sharks, a fellow with a dirty red fez and a huge hooked nose.

"Do you speak English?" he asked.

"I spik all languages, Italian, Grek, Tergish, Yarman——"

"That will do," said the boy. "Here is our luggage. Look after it and get us into a boat."

In some marvelous manner it was accomplished. They descended a ladder into a swaying boat, and their luggage followed them like magic. Then came the dragoman Merriwell had selected, and soon they were on their way to the shore.

"Thank fortune!" laughed Dick. "I hope we have seen the last of Aziz Achmet, Major Fitts, and Miss Sarah Ann Ketchum."

CHAPTER II—IN PERSIA

When they reached the pier they found themselves confronted by several Turkish officers, who immediately began questioning them. Their passports were scrutinized doubtfully; and it began to appear that there would be a long delay, during which all their luggage would be overhauled and examined piece by piece.

Then Mustapha, the dragoman, whispered a word in Dick's ear, and directly the boy slipped some money into the hand of one of the officers, whose manner toward them underwent a most surprising change, for he politely assured them that their baggage would not be opened and that there need not be the slightest delay. They were at liberty to leave the custom house at once and take their belongings with them.

Barely had they passed from the custom house when they suddenly found themselves surrounded, as it seemed, by people from all the tribes of the earth. This throng was made up of street venders who were peddling all sorts of goods,

sugared figs, sandals, grapes, bread, clothes, and all of them shouting in a babel of tongues that was deafening and bewildering.

"Whoop!" cried Brad. "Talk about an Indian pow-wow! This beats it a mile! You hear me gurgle!"

When these peddlers would have charged on the Americans Mustapha warned them off and held them at bay, shooting violent remarks at them in a dozen different languages. With his aid they succeeded in passing through the thick of the throng without suffering physical violence.

"Well, I certain thought I was due to lose my scalp that go!" laughed the Texan. "Pard, you sure did a right good thing when you engaged this gent to pilot us. He knows his biz a plenty."

"Richard," said the professor, "I must compliment you on your acumen and discernment. It has aroused within my innermost depths unspeakable emotions of profound admiration which I am incompetent to adequately express——"

"Hold on, professor!" cried Dick. "Leave that kind of gas to the lady from Boston, and talk in your usual sensible manner. Up to the present occasion you have been running things, but your encounter with Major Fitts left you in such a condition that I saw something had to be done, and so I tried my hand."

"With flattering success, my boy—with flattering success. Why, young as you are, I believe you could get along anywhere—in any country or clime."

"Thanks, professor. We'll let it go at that."

"What is that chap with the can and wooden mugs selling?" questioned Brad.

"That is a water seller," exclaimed Zenas.

"Water? Wow! Is water so dear on this range that they can peddle it?"

"Water is the beverage of the Turk. He never touches intoxicants. Unspeakable he may be, but he has that virtue."

"That may be true," said Dick; "but he doesn't keep his streets clean."

In truth they had emerged into a labyrinth of dark, narrow, and filthy streets, all the charm of the place having disappeared as soon as they were fairly on land. The mosques and towers had vanished, and their surroundings were decidedly repellent. Everywhere was mud, and garbage, and dogs. Of the latter there seemed to be hundreds upon hundreds of every breed and description.

"They are the street cleaners," explained the professor. "Here no one harms a dog, for if it were not for them the city would become too filthy for human beings to inhabit."

"Well, I certain am not as much stuck on Constantinople as I was," growled Brad.

"I must remind you," said Zenas, "that there is really no such place as Constantinople. The European quarters of the city is called Pera, while the Moslem

quarter is Stamboul."

"Perhaps Brad isn't stuck on it," said Dick; "but I am. If this mud gets worse I shall be stuck on it to such an extent that I can't perambulate. Look here, Mustapha, have we got to foot it all the way to our hotel?"

"No, effendi; we tak' tram car, we tak' horse—you choose."

Even as he spoke they came to a street corner where several saddled horses were waiting, after the manner of cabs in an American city.

"Me to the broncho!" cried Brad.

"There is the tram car," said Dick, with a motion.

The car was seen a short distance away, and the professor favored choosing that method of conveyance. Mustapha, however, for all that he had invited them make their choice, argued against it, explaining that half the car was reserved for ladies and that the other half was always crowded to suffocation.

Therefore they decided on the horses. Soon they were mounted and on their way up the long hill to Pera.

Although much of its beauty had vanished, the strange sights and sounds of the city keenly interested the American lads. They beheld people of many nationalities, yellow-coated Jews, with corkscrew curls, Bohemians, Nubians, Chinamen, Englishmen—all hastening on their various ways.

Pera proved to be a city quite modern in appearance, made up mostly of monotonous four-storied houses, new hotels, and shops filled with machine-made Oriental goods. The houses were flat-roofed and nearly all of them had balconies with cast-iron railings.

At last they arrived at their hotel, where they settled with Mustapha, who settled in turn with the owner of the horses.

"When I come next?" asked Mustapha. "You need interpriter dat spik lanquages well. I tak' you all ofer efrywheres. You haf much troubles you try go 'thout good dragoman."

By this time the professor had fully recovered, and he made arrangements with the dragoman, who then took his departure.

In the hotel they were turned over to a huge tattooed Nubian, his midnight blackness made more pronounced by the snow-white garments he wore. The Nubian conducted them to their rooms in the upper story, where their luggage was presently brought. Finding the rooms fairly satisfactory, with windows overlooking Pera, the Golden Horn, and giving them a view of the Turkish city beyond, they prepared to settle down and be satisfied.

First Dick took a long survey of the scene that could be beheld from the most advantageous window. From that point he could look away onto Galata and Stamboul, and again he was enchanted by the spectacle. The sun was shining on the palaces, mosques, and tall minarets, it was lighting the ripples of the Golden

Horn, and over all was the superbly blue sky which defies the skill of the greatest artist.

Dick heaved a deep sigh.

"Strange that it all should seem so beautiful from a distance and that the beauty should so quickly vanish on close inspection," he said. "In this case it is indeed true that 'familiarity breeds contempt.'"

"That sure is right," agreed Buckhart. "All the same, we'll proceed to get familiar with it, I reckon."

They next indulged in the luxury of a bath, taking turns, and all felt decidedly refreshed.

A call brought the Nubian, and they were informed that they could be served with anything they wished in their rooms, if they were willing to pay the extra charge.

After considerable discussion, they ordered a meal. There was sufficient delay to whet their appetites, and then the Nubian and an assistant reappeared, a table was spread, and they sat down to eat.

"A fried boot leg would taste good to me now," declared the Texan. "That being the case, I reckon I'll manage to get along on the fodder they supply here."

But everything proved more than satisfactory. There was enough, and it was good.

During the meal the giant black man stood ready to wait on them. When not serving them, he folded his tattooed arms across his massive chest and regarded them steadily with his eyes. When they had finished the assistant reappeared, and the table and dishes were removed.

"I sure would hate to have that gent place his paws on me in violence," observed Buckhart. "I opine he's some powerful."

"He looks like a Hercules," said Dick.

"He made me extremely nervous," confessed the professor. "I think I'll inform the proprietor that we would much prefer having some one else attend us while we are here."

"Don't!" exclaimed Merriwell. "I rather fancy the Nubian."

They lounged about for a time after eating, but finally the professor made an excuse to leave the boys, saying he would return soon.

"Pard," chuckled Buckhart, when Zenas was gone, "the old boy did get a plenty smashed on the woman from Boston."

"I'm glad we got him away from her—and from Major Fitts."

"And I'm glad we won't be bothered any more by that sneaking Turk, Aziz Achmet, who seemed spying on us. Wonder what Aziz took us for. I believe he was some sort of Turkish confidence man. He was a heap eager to act as Major Fitts' second in a duel."

"Think of Zenas Gunn in a duel!" exclaimed Dick, and they laughed heartily.

After a while Merriwell became worried over the professor's protracted absence. Going to the door, he stepped outside.

He stepped into full view of two men, who were whispering in the shadows of a draped alcove.

One was the giant Nubian.

The other was Aziz Achmet, the mysterious Turk!

CHAPTER III—THE PERSISTENCE OF ACHMET

There was something decidedly ominous and sinister in the behavior of the coal-black giant and the silent, secretive Turk, who were whispering there in the shadows. In spite of himself, Dick felt a sudden faint chill, like an icy breath, sweep over him.

He stood quite still and regarded them steadily. They saw him, and their whispering stopped. The eyes of the tattooed black man seemed to gleam with a baleful fire, but his dark face remained as unchangeable as marble.

Slowly a strange smile overspread the countenance of Achmet. With a quick, silent step, he advanced toward the boy. He spoke in a low, soft tone:

"So you are safely here, my lad? I see no harm has befallen you."

His English was almost perfect.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Dick. "This is not a place in which one of your faith should choose to linger, with the City of the Faithful so near. Indeed, I have been told that the better men of your religion never deign to contaminate themselves by setting foot in this place, which is polluted by the infidel. Your conduct is suspicious, to say the least."

"It is seldom one who may not be well suspected is in such haste to suspect another," retorted the Turk, still with that strange, faint smile which was very annoying to the boy.

Indignation swelled within Dick's heart, for now he was fully satisfied that they were being spied upon by this man.

"Look here," he said, "you'll get into trouble if you continue to follow us

about."

"Be careful that you do not get into far more serious trouble."

"There is no reason why we should get into trouble, for we have a way of minding our own business."

"Then you are the first Americans I have seen who have that excellent habit," retorted Achmet, in a manner that became more and more insulting.

Had Dick not learned by example and practice to control his temper, he might have lost his head. He kept cool, however—outwardly, at least.

"It is plain you have been spying on us," he said. "We caught you in our stateroom on the steamer——"

"An accident."

"An accident, perhaps, that we caught you. It was no accident that you were there. What's your game, man? You are up to some rascally business."

"I like not your lack of politeness, boy. I am not the one to answer questions. It is you who should explain, but I will talk with the man whom you call professor."

"I don't know whether you will or not."

"I demand to see him."

"You will have to find him."

"Is he not in those rooms?"

"No."

"Let me see."

The manner of Achmet plainly denoted that he did not believe Dick.

"We have engaged those rooms and paid in advance for them," said Merriwell, still holding himself in check. "We are entitled to privacy in them, and we have no intention of admitting strange and suspicious visitors, especially a Turk of your questionable behavior."

"You refuse me admittance?"

"Decidedly."

Aziz Achmet made a quick sign to the black giant. Instantly the Nubian strode forward. Dick made a move to retreat, but the arm of the black man darted out and one powerful hand seized the lad. Merriwell had not overestimated the probable strength of the tattooed man, for, with scarcely an effort, it seemed, the boy was lifted from his feet and placed to one side.

Achmet quickly advanced to the door, flung it open, and entered the room.

Brad Buckhart had caught the hum of voices outside and was crossing the room to investigate when he found himself face to face with the Turk.

"Waugh!" exclaimed the Texan, in surprise.

"Pardon, boy," said Achmet, still maintaining his quiet manner and soft speech. "I would speak with the professor."

"Is that so?" said Brad. "Well, whoever invited you to walk in all unceremo-

nious and chirklike? It strikes me that you are some forward in your deportment. Where's my pard?"

"Here!" cried Dick, who had been released by the Nubian, and who now hastened into the room. "This man forced an entrance. He has dogged us here, Brad."

"Dogged is a proper word for it, I reckon!" grated the Texan, beginning to bridle. "Forced his way in, did he? Well, I judge we'll just shoot him out on his neck and teach him a bit of common decency!"

He proceeded to strip off his coat in a very businesslike manner.

"Hold!" commanded Achmet. "You will regret it, you infidel whelp, if you place your vile hands on me!"

"Whoop!" roared the Westerner. "We'll sure see about that right away! Come on, partner!"

But now the Nubian stalked into the room, apparently ready to take a hand in the encounter, and Achmet called attention to him.

"This man alone," he declared, "is more than the equal of twenty boys. He once slew a strong man with a single blow of his fist. If you lift a finger against me he will rend you. Be careful!"

In spite of this warning Buckhart would have pitched in; but Dick had better judgment and hastened to restrain his friend.

"The black man is dangerous, Brad," he said, in a low tone. "Unless we use deadly weapons, he can master us alone. Besides that, we do not wish to kick up an uproar unless forced to do so. Steady, old man!"

"Whoop!" cried Brad. "This business is making me sizzle a heap!"

"It is an outrage, and we'll enter a complaint."

"You bet your boots!"

"That is your privilege," smiled Achmet, in his half-sneering way. "When I am through, you may complain as much as you like; but first bring forth the professor, that I may question him. Why is he hiding?"

"Hiding? Do you think he would hide from you?" exclaimed Dick. "I tell you he is not here. Look for yourself."

"And be right careful that none of our belongings stick to your fingers," growled the Texan. "We've been robbed in various ways from London all the way here; but this is the first time any one has tried the game open and brazen, like this."

"You are not in the least danger of being robbed," assured the Turk. "I invite you to watch me, in order that you may see you have no complaint of that sort to make."

He then looked into the adjoining room, and the bath.

"Well, are you satisfied?" demanded Dick.

Achmet showed a trace of annoyance and disappointment. He stated that he had been told by the Nubian that the professor was there, and further that he was sure Zenas Gunn had not left the hotel since his arrival.

"Which makes it plain that he has played the spy on us right along," said Dick, addressing Brad, but not lowering his voice.

"Sure!" rasped Buckhart.

"I will wait for his return," said the Turk. "While I am waiting, perhaps you will inform me what business has brought you to this country."

"Our business is none of your business," declared Dick.

"Of that I will judge when I am satisfied that I have learned your business."

"We are traveling."

"For what purpose?"

"To see the world."

"Two boys and an old man. In Italy your behavior was suspicious. You disappeared from Naples in great haste, without explaining why you left so suddenly or whither you went."

"Great tarantulas!" muttered Brad. "He's even got track of us as far back as that."

"In Venice you were concerned in some singular and unaccountable things, and in Greece you had dealings with lawless characters. Had you remained in Athens, you must have explained your actions to officials of the city government. You left there, also, in haste."

Dick wondered that the man should know so much of their movements.

"It seems," continued Achmet, "that in various places the police have been warned against you; but that in each instance they sought to find out about you only to find you suddenly departed."

"This certain is a plenty interesting!" gasped Buckhart. "What does it mean, pard? Can you tell?"

Dick had been thinking swiftly. His hand fell on his friend's arm.

"Brad, it is the work of Bunol and Marsh, our bitter enemies. They were sore because we fooled them by getting the Budthornes out of their power. They have lost track of Dunbar Budthorne and his sister, Nadia, but have managed somehow to keep trace of us, and have tried to cause us as much annoyance as possible."

"I opine you're right, Dick," nodded Buckhart. "That's just it. I wouldn't be surprised to see those two onery varmints turn up any time. Well, they've succeeded in making a lot of fool work for a lot of fool people, and this is the first time we've been touched by it."

Achmet had listened to their words with a manner of mingled interest and doubt. It was plain that he did not understand, and he was on the point of questioning them further when the sudden sound of excited and angry voices reached

their ears through the partly open doorway.

"The professor!" cried Dick. "Something is doing, Brad! Come on!"

"Lay the trail, pard! I'm at your heels!"

They rushed forth and ran toward the point from which came the sound of those voices.

"You're a miserable, crawling worm! You're a whisky-soaked, dried-up, offensive squid! You have annoyed the lady by your obnoxious attentions, and they must cease!"

It was the voice of Zenas.

"Yo', suh, are a long-eared jackass, suh, and I demand satisfaction fo' your insults, suh!"

"Major Fitts!" exclaimed Dick, in dismay.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" shrilled another voice. "This is scandalous! You must not quarrel over me! It is shocking to my delicate sensibilities. I cannot permit it!"

"And Sarah Ann, sure as shooting!" cried Brad.

At the head of the stairs were three persons. Zenas Gunn was shaking his fist down at Major Fitts, while the major was shaking his fist up at the professor. Miss Ketchum had her hands clasped in an attitude of despair, while she implored them to desist.

Dick halted, folding his arms.

"Now what do you think of that?" he muttered, in disgust.

"It certain is some annoying," chuckled Buckhart, pausing with his hands resting on his hips. "Shall we pitch in, pard, and break it up?"

"I'm tempted to let those two old fools have it out," said Merriwell.

"Good idea! Mebbe it will cure them both."

"Take your fist away!" snarled the professor, knocking the hand of the little man aside.

"Don't yo' strike at me, suh!" panted the major, his face red as a boiled lobster, and his gray mustache bristling.

"Strike at you!" retorted Zenas scornfully. "If I ever struck at you, you human wart, there wouldn't be anything left of you but a grease spot!"

"Oh, please, please stop!" sobbed Sarah Ann, trying to get hold of them and force them apart.

"Yo' had better hide behind a lady's petticoat!" raged the man from Mississippi.

"Hide behind nothing!" retorted Gunn, giving Miss Ketchum an embrace and looking over one shoulder, while he reached over her other shoulder to again shake his fist at Fitts. "She is trying to keep me from annihilating you."

Finding herself in the professor's embrace, Miss Ketchum screamed and

seemed on the point of fainting.

"Oh, Moses!" laughed Buckhart. "Look at that, pard—just look!"

"I see," said Dick, also convulsed. "The professor isn't losing the opportunity to hug Sarah Ann, and it makes the major bloodthirsty."

Fitts danced round in an endeavor to get hold of Gunn, but the latter skillfully turned so that he kept Miss Ketchum's limp form between them.

"Unhand that lady!" rasped the man from Mississippi, fairly frothing. "How dare yo' behave in such a manner!"

"Oh, go back to your kennel!" advised Zenas.

The major caught hold of Sarah Ann and managed to dance round until he could get his hands on the professor.

"Release her!" he commanded.

Miss Ketchum straightened up a little.

"Such a shocking scandal!" she sobbed.

"Yo' have compromised her, suh!" panted Fitts. "Yo' shall pay the penalty with your life, suh!"

"I've stood just as much of this as I can!" grated Zenas. "I'll just throw you downstairs!"

Which he attempted to do, while Sarah Ann again tried to part them. On the top stair both lost their balance. Wildly they grabbed at something as they toppled. The right hand of Zenas caught Miss Ketchum. The left hand of the major closed on her, also. Then all three toppled, a shriek of terror escaped the woman, and down they went.

Bump, bump, bump-ety-bump!

Tangled in a most astonishing manner, the three seemed to bound like a huge rubber ball from stair to stair. At intervals legs and arms shot out from the mass and described half circles in the air. The woman continued to scream, the professor yelled, while the major grunted and gasped with every thump. It sounded as if the entire hotel was falling.

"Oh, say, pard, this is awful!" cried Buckhart, rushing toward the stairs.

"I'm afraid the professor will be somewhat dented," said Dick, also losing no time.

Thud! crash!

The trio landed at the bottom of the stairs.

Sarah Ann struck in a sitting posture, with her skirts outspread. She was minus a wig and a full set of false teeth, and she presented a ludicrous spectacle of wreck and despair. Both men were beneath her, and having landed on them she did not seem to be seriously harmed.

Dick and Brad bounded down the stairs and reached her.

"Are you hurt, madam?" questioned Merriwell, his natural chivalry causing

him to express anxiety for her first.

She spoke, and strange were the mumbling sounds which issued from her toothless mouth. "I've sost my seesh in thish dishgrashful affairsh," she answered. "Be sho kindsh to reshtorsh my seesh, pleash."

"Here madam," said Dick, picking up something, "are part of them."

"And here, madam," said Brad, also picking something up, "are the rest of them."

She hastily slipped them into her mouth, while Mowbry Fitts began to kick and shout.

"Let me get up!" he called, in a muffled voice.

"Be quiet," said Miss Ketchum, "until I have arranged my toilet."

Her head was almost entirely devoid of hair.

"Perhaps this may assist you," said Dick, discovering her wig and handing it to her.

"Help!" called the husky voice of Professor Gunn. "I'm smothering! I can't breathe!"

"You don't deserve to breathe," said Miss Ketchum, calmly adjusting the wig. "You are two indecent creatures, and I am sure you have disgraced me forever."

Major Fitts was becoming frantic.

"I'm dying!" he groaned.

"I'm dead!" came faintly from Professor Gunn.

By this time scores of guests had reached the spot and stood asking questions. Others were coming. The whole house had been aroused.

"Dick," said Brad, "I do believe the professor is smothering! She's sitting on his head, and his struggles are growing weaker."

"Lift her, Brad," said Merriwell.

They caught hold of her and stood her on her feet.

"Water!" gasped the professor.

"Whisky!" wheezed the major.

They lay on their backs, having managed to roll over, gasping for breath.

Miss Ketchum looked down at them with an air of contempt.

"I hope," she said, "that the proprietor has you both locked up as lunatics! You are the worst old fools I ever saw! So there!"

Then, declining assistance, she hurried up the stairs.

CHAPTER IV—THE

CHALLENGE

The final words of Sarah Ann ere she pranced up the stairs did much to revive the professor and the major. They sat up and looked at each other. The expression on their faces was comical in the extreme.

"She meant you, sir!" rasped Gunn.

"She meant yo', suh!" snapped Fitts.

"I think she plainly included both of you," said Dick; "and I fancy it is the opinion of all present that she hit the nail on the head."

"I don't know about the nail," groaned Zenas; "but I'm sure something hit me on the head. And that woman—that heartless jade—sat on me! She nearly finished me!"

"Had she completed the job," declared the major, "it would have been a blessing, suh. It would have disposed of a pestiferous, weak-minded, addle-pated, goggle-eyed——"

"Hold on! Stop right there!" cried Zenas. "That will do! You have reached the limit, sir—the limit!"

"Yo' may think so, suh; but yo'll find this is far from the limit. I am a man of honor, and I demand satisfaction. I demand blood!"

"He's a butcher!" chuckled Brad.

"You have it already," said Zenas. "Your nose is bleeding, sir."

"You know what I mean. I demand that you meet me in mortal combat. You escaped me once, but you shall not escape again. I caught you sneaking around the door of Miss Ketchum's room and——"

"I caught you there, you fabricator!" flung back the professor.

At this point the proprietor of the hotel appeared on the scene and promptly announced that he would not have such things in his house. He threatened to eject them both, whereupon Dick hastened to assure the angry man that he would take care of the professor and see that there was no further disturbance.

Then Dick and Brad lifted Zenas to his feet and started him up the stairs, one on either side.

"You shall hear from me again!" cried the major, in defiance of those who had raised him and were dragging him away.

"Bah, sir!" Zenas flung over his shoulder.

"Boo, suh!" Fitts hurled back.

"Slowly, slowly, boys!" groaned the old pedagogue. "I feel as if all my joints were dislocated and half my bones were broken. It's a wonder my head is not

mashed flat, for that woman—that creature—sat on it! Then she called me an old fool!"

"But," said Dick, "you know you could spend your life at her feet, listening to the musical murmur of her heavenly voice."

"Her voice sounds like tearing a rag!" sneered Zenas. "She's all skin and bones, and——"

"Why, professor!" interrupted Brad. "I heard you assert that her form had the grace of a gazelle."

"Never—never said it! She's a hatchet-faced old——"

"Tut! tut!" chided Dick. "You know you admired her the first time you beheld her intellectual and classic countenance."

"Now stop it, boys! Did you see her glare at me with those fishy eyes?"

"Awful!" exclaimed Dick. "You called her eyes limpid lakes."

"I deny it! I deny it! And she has false teeth, for I heard her mumble that she lost them when she fell."

"You distinctly stated," reminded Buckhart, "that her teeth were pearls beyond price."

"I think they cost about eleven dollars a set," estimated Dick.

"And her golden halo of hair came off in the shuffle," said the Texan. "She's as bald as a billiard ball."

"Say no more!" entreated Zenas. "Get me to my room and spread me on the bed. Boys, if you ever tell of this—if you ever even mention it again—I'll send you both back home!"

By this time they had reached their rooms, and they helped the old fellow to the bed, on which he slowly sank, groaning as if in great distress.

"Bring me my medicine, Richard," he entreated. "I must have a small dose. You will find it in my medicine case. The leather-covered flask, Richard. That's it. Never mind pouring any. I'll take it directly from the flask. It is a harmless tonic, and I need it greatly just now."

He took a long pull at the leather-covered flask. After that he lay back and closed his eyes for a moment. Suddenly they popped open and he exclaimed:

"To think that creature should call me an old fool!"

"But you know pearls of wisdom drop from her sweet lips," laughed Dick.

"And she is a lofty-minded, angelic girl," added Brad.

"Get out of here, you two rascals!" cried the old man. "You're laughing at me, you ungrateful scamps! Do you want to drive me crazy? Leave me to meditate on the frailty of human flesh."

The laughing lads retired to the adjoining room.

"Well, one good thing happened," said Dick; "it cured him of his foolishness over Sarah Ann."

"He sure is well cured," agreed Buckhart.

There came a sharp knock on the door. Before they could open it, it was flung wide by the giant Nubian, and Aziz Achmet again entered the room.

"This is too much!" exclaimed Dick. "I'll call the proprietor and see if we are to be annoyed by this man in this outrageous manner."

"Wait a moment, boy," advised the Turk, still maintaining his cool and insolent manner. "I am here on most important business. Professor Gunn has been challenged to mortal combat by Major Fitts, and I have come as the representative of the major to make arrangements for the affair of honor."

"Well," said Dick, "you may return and tell that little blusterer to go to a warmer clime! Professor Gunn is not a fighting man, and he will not meet Major Fitts in a duel."

"Hold on—hold on, Richard!" called the professor, who was beginning to feel the influence of the "medicine" from the leather-covered flask. "Don't be so hasty! I want you to understand that I am no coward! That withered old pippin can't frighten me! No, sir! If he wants to fight a duel, I'll meet him, and I'll give him all he wants of it!"

"Professor, you——"

"Stop, Richard—stop right there! I know my own business. If I were to let that mistake from Mississippi drive me into my boots I'd never after have the face to look at my own reflection in a mirror."

"But a duel, professor—a real duel——"

"I know. It's all right. I'll show him the kind of stuff I'm made of, I will! He thinks he'll frighten me, but he'll find out he can't jar me a bit. I'll meet him with weapons of any sort. I'll meet him anywhere!"

"Whoop!" cried Buckhart. "The old boy means it, pard, and I reckon he'll make good!"

"Mowbry Fitts will find out that I'll make good," said Zenas. "He can't send his representative here and frighten Zenas Gunn, of Fardale. Fix it up, Richard. You shall be my second. I leave it all to you. That unfortunate fall shook me up, and I'm a trifle dizzy. I'll retire again. But this gentleman had better tell old Fitts to prepare for his funeral. That's all he'll be good for when I am through with him."

Then Zenas again retired to his room.

Aziz Achmet waited. Dick Merriwell thought swiftly.

"Where and when shall this duel take place?" he asked.

"There is an old cemetery a short distance up the street," said the Turk.

"Well?"

"It will be an excellent place for the meeting."

"And the hour?"

"Daybreak to-morrow, if it suits you."

"That's all right."

"The weapons——"

"We have the choice of weapons," interrupted Merriwell.

"And you choose swords—or pistols?"

"We will not only choose the weapons, we'll provide them," said the boy. "I'll have them on hand, Mr. Achmet."

"But it is customary to settle all these little details in advance, boy."

"You have forced this affair on Professor Gunn. I guarantee that he will be on hand at the appointed time to-morrow morning. I also guarantee that he will have the weapons. If you're not satisfied with that, get out of these rooms and cease to annoy us further."

"That's business!" cried Buckhart.

Achmet seemed to think a moment, but he finally bowed, retreating gracefully toward the door.

"It is only a single point," he said, "and I shall advise my principal to concede it. But I wish you to understand that we shall be on our guard for trickery, and I'll see that Major Fitts has a fair and even chance."

Then he passed through the door, which the Nubian closed.

CHAPTER V—IN THE CEMETERY

When Pera was swept by fire but one thing in the burned portion remained practically unchanged. It was an old cemetery. It is there to-day, in the midst of the city of modern buildings, and this cemetery was the spot chosen by Aziz Achmet for the duel.

To this old graveyard in the dusky light of morning came three persons. One was an old man, haggard and pallid; the others were boys. The boys each carried a basket carefully covered by a cloth.

Professor Gunn had scarcely closed his eyes in sleep that night. He tried to sleep, but his "medicine" ran out, and without its soothing influence he wooed slumber in vain. During the greater part of the night he had walked the floor of

his room or sat writing at a little table.

Beneath the dismal cypress trees which filled the cemetery it was still quite dark.

"Boys," whispered the professor, as they paused on the point of entering, "can you see anything of them?"

"Can't see much of anything," answered Dick, "only what looks like a lot of drunken ghosts."

In truth the graveyard seemed filled with reeling, ghostly forms, but, on closer inspection, these were found to be tombstones. The human appearance of these lurching stones was explained on closer examination, for it is the custom of the Turks to carve the stone above the grave of every man so that its top is crowned either with a turban or a fez. Seen in a dim light, the tilted stones looked remarkably like staggering human forms, robed in white.

"Boo!" muttered Buckhart, shrugging his broad shoulders. "This sure is a spooky old place."

Both boys heard a sudden sound like rattling dice. They discovered it came from the professor, whose teeth were chattering loudly.

"Keep a stiff backbone, professor," advised Dick. "It will all be over in a short time."

"Ye-yes," faltered Zenas, "it will all bub-bub-be over fuf-fuf-for me. Richard, I fuf-fuf-feel that I am gug-gug-going to fuf-fuf-fall."

"Nonsense! Why, you were bold as a lion last night when Achmet called."

"Bub-bub-but that was lul-lul-last nun-nun-night," chattered the shaking old fellow. "Besides, I had tut-tut-taken some tut-tut-tonic. I wush I ha-ha-had sus-sus-some nun-nun-now."

"It sure is a shame you ran out of tonic," said Brad. "But you won't be any good whatever unless you get a brace on. You've got to fight Fitts now."

"Yes, you'll have to give him fits," said Dick, making a poor pun. "You can't back out without being branded as a coward, after which you'd never again dare look at your own reflection in a mirror."

"I know it," sighed Zenas; "but I was a fool to be so bub-brave last night! That woman is responsible for it all! If I dud-dud-die, my blood will be on her head!"

"But you're not going to fall," declared Buckhart.

They finally succeeded in leading him into the gloom of the cemetery, and he seemed greatly relieved when they ascertained beyond doubt that Major Fitts and his second had not arrived.

"Perhaps they won't come at all," said the old pedagogue eagerly.

"Perhaps not," agreed Dick; "but I wouldn't count on that, for I believe Achmet will bring the major."

But the professor was hopeful as well as anxious. He watched the gray light of morning sifting through the cypress branches and bringing out the ghostly tombstones with more and more distinctness. Then he began to fear.

"I—I think there is no doubt about it," he said, at last. "He is not coming, boys. He's a bluffer. He tried to bluff me, but he failed."

Having arrived at this conclusion, he rapidly grew indignant.

"This thing is outrageous!" he blustered—"outrageous, I say! Why, the craven little whipper-snapper! Just think of it, he hasn't the courage to come here like a man and meet me in mortal combat! He is a coward—that's what he is, a coward! A fire eater, indeed! Bah! The next time I meet him, I shall tweak his nose! Yes, sir, tweak it!"

In the dim, gray light Dick and Brad exchanged glances. Neither laughed, but both felt like it.

"I'm tired of waiting," declared Zenas. "The time is past. He isn't coming, and we may as well return to the hotel."

"I think we had better wait a little longer," urged Dick.

"But what's the use. It's morning now, and that craven from Mississippi is not on hand. I'll warrant he is hiding beneath his bed this very minute."

"I opine you're mistaken, professor," said Brad dryly. "If I ain't a heap mistaken, here he comes now."

"Where?" gasped Zenas.

"There," said the Texan, motioning toward three dim figures which were entering the cemetery and approaching. "I reckon it's Major Fitts, accompanied by two friends."

"Oh, Lordy!" groaned the professor, growing limp and leaning on Dick's shoulder, all the bluster taken out of him in a second.

Once more Merriwell urged the old pedagogue to brace up.

"Don't let him see you're afraid," he urged. "Do stiffen up, professor!"

"Richard," groaned Zenas, "I had a premonition that my time had come. Here, Richard, take these papers. One is my last will and testament. The other is a fond adieu to my wife. Poor Nancy! how I pity her! She'll never see me again! Tell her how I perished, Richard. Perhaps some time—when I'm gone—you may think—of me. It is a fearful thing—to perish—in a foreign land—far from—the loved ones—at home."

The old man choked and could speak no more.

The three persons were now quite near, and by the dim light the boys could recognize the short figure of Major Fitts. Aziz Achmet had the major by the arm and seemed talking to him earnestly in low tones. The third man carried a small hand case, and seemed like a surgeon.

Fitts and the surgeon stopped a short distance away, while Achmet ad-

vanced swiftly, with his usual soft step.

"I see you are here, gentlemen," he said.

"We are," returned Dick; "but we began to think you were not coming. Professor Gunn is anxious to have this affair over in order that he may take a bath before breakfast."

"A bath!" said the Turk. "Before breakfast?"

"Yes; he always has his morning shower or sponge."

"But he may not need one this morning."

"I reckon he will," muttered Buckhart, to himself. "If Fitts' aim is any good, the professor sure will need one a heap."

"Major Fitts," said Achmet, "is inclined to be magnanimous."

"Indeed?" said Dick questioningly.

"Yes; he wishes me to say that he has no real desire to slay one of his own countrymen."

"Kind of him!"

"And, therefore, if Professor Gunn will apologize, he will overlook the insult and spare him."

"I—I think I had better do it, Richard!" whispered Zenas.

"Mr. Achmet," said Dick stiffly, "you will kindly inform Major Fitts that he has quite misunderstood the situation. Tell him that unless he immediately apologizes in the most humble manner Professor Gunn insists that the affair be carried through to the bitter end."

"To the bitter end!" put in Buckhart. "That's the stuff!"

The Turk bowed.

"Then there is nothing else to be done but to arrange the preliminaries. I will speak to the major a moment."

As soon as Achmet's back was turned the professor seized Dick and almost sobbed in his ear:

"Richard, Richard, why did you do it? My blood will be on your head!"

"Hush!" returned Dick. "Don't you see the major is frightened worse than you are? Achmet has dragged him here, and he's ready to take to his heels and run for his life."

"Wh-what?" gasped Zenas, straightening up as if electrified. "Are you sure?"

"No question about it. Achmet is having a difficult time to hold him now."

It was a fact that Mowbry Fitts was very much disturbed. He protested that there might be a mutual understanding through which the affair could be dropped. All the way to the cemetery he had hoped that the professor would not be there and would fail to appear. He now declared that Achmet was responsible for the whole wretched affair.

"It is a shame that two highly intelligent men, two eminently respectable citizens of a great and glorious country, should meet here, suh, in this wretched old cemetery, suh, and slaughter each other in cold blood," he said.

Achmet shrugged his shoulders.

"I am quite surprised in you," he declared. "I thought you a brave man. The other American is waiting and anxious. If you show the white feather now, you will be branded the rest of your life as a coward."

At last the major seemed to brace up. He announced that he was ready for the worst.

By this time it had grown quite light outside, although there were still deep shadows in the cemetery.

Again Achmet turned to the professor and the boys.

"We are ready," he said. "Where are the weapons?"

The surgeon was kneeling on the ground, having opened his case. He was laying out his instruments on a white cloth.

"If you are ready, we are," said Dick. "The weapons are in these baskets. You may select either basket you choose. Let the major remove his coat in order that his arms may be free and unhampered. Professor, strip."

Smothering a groan, Zenas permitted Brad to assist him in removing his coat. Major Fitts also took his coat off.

Achmet hesitated when invited to choose one of the baskets. He feared a trick and inquired if the weapons in one basket were identical with those in the other. Dick assured him that there was not the slightest difference.

"I selected them myself with the greatest care," asserted the boy. "They are good and strong."

"And rank," muttered Buckhart softly.

"Let the major and the professor stand ten paces apart," said Dick. "At that distance, they should be able to hit each other once in three shots, at least. Let them begin firing at the word and continue until one or the other falls, cries enough, or the ammunition is exhausted. Brad, pace the distance."

Buckhart did so promptly, but his paces were very short. He made a mark with his heel for Zenas and another to indicate the position of the major.

In the meantime Achmet had selected one of the baskets and carried it to the point where his principal was to stand. Dick placed the other near the spot marked for the professor. Neither of the duelists knew the sort of weapons decided on, and both watched with great anxiety the uncovering of the baskets.

Taking note of Achmet's movements, Dick removed the cloth from the professor's basket at the same moment that the Turk lifted the covering of the other basket.

Both baskets were filled with eggs!

"Eggs?" gasped Fitts.

"Eggs?" breathed Gunn.

"Eggs-actly," chuckled Brad Buckhart.

"Why, I—I don't understand!" faltered the professor.

"What does this mean, gentlemen?" demanded the major. "Will yo' kindly explain it?"

"Having the choice of weapons," said Dick, "I decided on eggs, good and rank. Here they are. Only fools fight duels over trivial things with deadly weapons. With these eggs you cannot kill each other, but you can soak each other to your hearts' content and thus satisfy your wounded honor."

"But, suh, I never heard of such a thing, suh!" exploded Fitts. "It is ridiculous!"

"All right," returned Dick. "If you object, I have brought these."

He produced two huge pistols.

"One," continued Dick, "is loaded. The other is not. You shall toss for choice. Then you shall stand at arm's length, place the pistols against each other's breast, and pull the triggers at the word. A moment later one of you will be a dead man, while the other will be unharmed. Does that suit you better, major?"

"It's unusual—decidedly unusual, suh! No, suh, it does not suit me at all, suh! I prefer the eggs."

"Good!" whispered Zenas. "So do I!"

"Then take your positions, gentlemen," ordered Dick.

Aziz Achmet threw up his hands, shaking his head in a baffled manner.

"Oh, these Americans, these Americans!" he muttered, retreating. "I had hoped they might destroy each other, which would save me further trouble with them. Now they are going to fight a duel with rotten eggs! Pah!"

The surgeon hastily threw his instruments into the case, which he closed and picked up, also retreating to get out of probable danger of being hit by one of those eggs.

The professor and the major got ready for action. Each picked up as many eggs as he could hold in his left hand and took one in his right.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" asked Dick, also backing off a little, an example followed by Brad.

"Ready!" answered both.

"Then—fire!"

Whizz! Spat!

The major missed, but the professor's aim was accurate, and he struck Fitts fairly in the centre of his white shirt bosom. The man from Mississippi staggered and clapped his hand to his nose.

"Oh, whew! Oh, murder!" he gasped. "That was not an egg! If it was it was

laid two thousand years ago!"

Whizz!—another one flew past the major's ear. This aroused him, and he got into action once more. Eggs flew through the air with increasing rapidity. While stooping to get a fresh supply of ammunition from his basket, Zenas was struck fairly on top of his bald head. The yellow mass spattered in all directions.

A strong odor filled the air, reaching the nostrils of both Dick and Brad, who were laughing heartily.

"Great horn spoon!" gurgled the Texan. "For a duel this sure beats! Look at 'em, pard! The professor got it in the neck that time! There—he hit the major! They'll be sights in a minute!"

Dick was laughing in his old, rollicking way.

"Oh, ha, ha, ha! Go it, professor! Soak him! That's the way! Ha, ha, ha!"

Never had that grim and gloomy cemetery resounded with such shouts of merriment.

"Oh, I'll fix him!" cried Zenas. "I'll teach him a lesson! I'll teach him to challenge me! I'll—— Murder! I'm blinded!"

In truth he had been struck fairly between the eyes, and the mass that spattered over his face completely blinded him.

"Teach me, will yo', suh?" triumphantly shouted the major. "Oh, I don't know!"

Dick was gasping for breath.

"Brad, it's t-too much!" he laughed, holding onto his sides. "Ha, ha, ha! It's too much!"

Professor Gunn wiped his sleeve across his eyes. Then he tried the other sleeve and succeeded in clearing them.

"Have yo' got enough, suh?" demanded the major. "Cry quits, suh, if yo' have."

"Never—never while I live!" grated Zenas.

"Then I'll have to finish yo', suh. I offered yo'——"

He said no more, for at that instant an egg thrown with all the force Zenas Gunn could command struck him full and fair in the mouth.

The little man went down as if shot.

"Whee!" shrilled the professor. "Got him then!"

Fitts kicked and floundered and then rolled over on his stomach, lifting himself to his hands and knees. The sounds he emitted were trying on those who heard him.

At this juncture two ladies suddenly appeared on the scene, having approached during the excitement without being observed. They were Sarah Ann Ketchum and an Englishwoman whom she had found in the hotel and induced to accompany her to the scene of the duel.

Major Fitts had written her a passionate note of farewell, telling her about the duel, where it was to be fought and when. This he had intrusted to a servant to be delivered that morning. The servant had not waited for Miss Ketchum to rise, but had rapped at her door until she got up and received the message. When she comprehended its contents she lost not a moment in dressing and getting the other woman to accompany her to the scene of the "deadly" meeting.

When she saw Major Fitts on his hands and knees, giving utterance to those distressing and terrible sounds, she shrieked and ran forward.

"Oh, heavens!" she cried. "He is slain! He is wounded unto death! He is dying! Hear him gurgle, and groan, and gasp for breath! It is a horrible tragedy!"

"Great horn spoon!" exclaimed Buckhart. "Sarah Ann is on deck, pard."

"She has arrived too late to prevent the fearful deed," said Dick.

The lady from Boston saw Professor Gunn. She shook her clenched hands at him and screamed:

"You murderer! You have killed the poor major! You have slain the idol of my heart!"

"Great Cæsar!" gasped Zenas. "So she acknowledged that human wart as the idol of her heart! Well, she may take her idol, eggs and all!"

Sarah Ann fell on her knees beside the major, clasping him in her arms.

"Poor, poor hero!" she sobbed. "Tell me where you are wounded."

"Fo' the love of goodness, go 'way!" gurgled Fitts thickly.

"What is this horrid odor?" she exclaimed chokingly. "It is frightful!"

"Turkish cemeteries always smell that way, madam," huskily declared the major. "Please go 'way! Please let me die in peace!"

"Never! I will remain by you until the last! I will—— But I can't endure this terrible odor! I'm growing faint! And what is this sticky substance all over your clothes?"

"That's blood—pure blood."

She held up her hands. The light was now sufficient for her to see.

"But it's not red—it's yellow!"

"That's the color of my blood, madam. I've had yellow fever. Do go 'way!"

"But it smells—it smells—— Why, it's everywhere! It's on the ground!"

"I've shed gallons of it already. I beg yo' to leave me!"

"And those brutes are permitting you to bleed to death! What monsters!"

She began to grow hysterical. The language she applied to the professor made him wince. It also aroused his resentment. When she repeatedly called him a murderer he finally decided that the limit had been reached. Prancing over to her, he shrilly cried:

"Madam, you are needlessly wasting your sympathy on that little runt. He's not seriously harmed, I assure you. We did fight a duel, and I am the victor; but

we did not engage with deadly weapons, and Major Fitts is not dying."

"Not dying? Did not use deadly weapons? Why—why, what did you use?"

"Eggs, madam—rotten eggs; and I am proud to say that I pasted him with them in a most scientific manner."

"Eggs?" screamed Miss Ketchum, springing up and looking at her besmeared hands. "Rotten eggs? Then this is not his blood!"

"Hardly," assured Zenas.

"Oh, horrible! Disgusting! It is perfectly shameful and outrageous! Look at my hands! Look at my waist! And the smell! I'm going to faint! Catch me!"

"Not on your life!" exclaimed Gunn, backing off. "I've learned my little book."

She did not faint. Instead, she stiffened up like a ramrod and denounced both the duelists in scathing and scornful terms. Once more she declared that both were fools, and finally she fled, accompanied by the Englishwoman.

CHAPTER VI—THE SIGHTS OF STAMBOUL

"Well, boys," said Professor Gunn, some days later, as the trio were lounging in their rooms after the midday meal, "what do you think of Constantinople? Have you seen about enough of it?"

"Well, we have seen a great deal," confessed Dick. "It is a fascinating and bewildering place, with its narrow, dirty streets, its swarms of people of many races, its veiled women, its dogs, its palaces and watch towers—in short, its thousands of strange sights."

"It is a whole lot queer," nodded Buckhart. "It gives me a right odd feeling to stand beside a mosque and see a muezzin come out on the balcony of a minaret and utter the call to prayer. The way he chants it kind of stirs something inside of me: 'God is great; there is but one God; Mohammed is the prophet of God; prayer is better than sleep; come to prayer!' Oh, I've got her all down fine, and I'll never forget the words nor how they sound."

"I suppose there are lots of places we have not seen, together with plenty of interesting things," said Dick. "The thing that I'll remember longest is the dance

of the howling dervishes."

"You bet that was a corker!" exclaimed the Texan, sitting up. "I opine I've got good nerves, but it certain came near driving me crazy to see them, a full dozen, just whirling and whirling like tops."

"Then when they began to chant and howl!" said Dick. "The way they wailed, and groaned, and cried, 'Allah, hough! Allah, hough!' was enough to disturb nerves of steel."

"But the finish was the worst, when all the whirlers had their eyes set and their lips covered with foam. No more howling-dervish shows for me!"

"Nor me, pard!"

"Well, when you youngsters get tired of Constantinople we'll move on," said Zenas.

"I sure would like to know whatever became of Major Fitts and Miss Ketchum," said Brad.

"Never mind them!" exclaimed the professor hastily. "It was a great relief when they both took themselves out of this hotel after that—after that encounter in the cemetery."

"After your bloody duel, professor," laughed Dick. "That was a fearful encounter, from which you came forth the victor."

"But somewhat damaged myself," confessed Zenas. "Boys, you want to remember what will happen to you if you ever relate that affair to any one."

Buckhart grinned.

"Miss Ketchum was some excited when she arrived on the scene of action. She thought the major was dying. I don't wonder, for the sounds he emitted after being struck in the mouth by that egg sure sounded like he was coughing up the ghost."

"She certainly was disgusted when she found the major's yellow blood was smashed rotten eggs," said Dick.

"She had the stuff all over her hands after putting her arms about him. Partner, that was a great racket!"

"Hum! haw!" coughed the professor. "Of course, on the major's account I was willing to carry out the programme and use eggs, but it was beneath my dignity, and I should have preferred a regular duel with pistols or swords."

"Professor!" exclaimed Dick. "Why, you know you were somewhat timid over the result before you learned what sort of weapons were to be used."

"Because I did not wish to have human blood on my hands. It was entirely for Major Fitts that I was worried."

"I opine," said Brad, "that old Aziz Achmet was just about as disgusted as any one. It is my judgment that the old pirate wanted to see the professor and the major carve each other up, though just what his reason for it was I can't say."

"He disappeared at the same time when Sarah and the major vanished," said Dick. "He was becoming a nuisance, and I thought we might have no end of trouble with him while in this place. However, I fancy he found out he was wasting his time spying on us. I'm still confident that Bunol and Marsh caused us to be placed under surveillance by the Turkish secret police."

"The Turkish secret police?" exclaimed Zenas. "You don't mean to say——"

"There is such a body, and Aziz Achmet belonged to it. We were suspicious characters, and he watched us. But I have an idea that he finally decided that we were exactly what we represented ourselves to be, ordinary travelers. Miss Ketchum, however, belongs to a society that is seeking to investigate and correct the wrongs of the Armenians in Turkey, and, therefore, Achmet transferred his attention wholly to her."

"Good gracious!" spluttered the professor. "Although she turned out to be a hatchet-faced old maid, I hope no harm has come to her in this heathen land."

"Don't you worry," laughed Dick. "Major Fitts will look out for her. All I ask is that he keeps her away from us."

"I don't think the major wants to see us again," chuckled Brad. "I'm sure he wouldn't fancy having the story of that duel get back to Natchez, Mississippi."

"Well, boys, shall we spend the afternoon in talk, or shall we go out and see something?" asked the professor.

They quickly decided that they were ready to go out, and once more rose the question of what they should see.

"I have it!" cried the old pedagogue.

"Name it," urged Dick.

"The Underground Palace."

"What's that?"

"You haven't heard of it? Good! It's the very place for us to visit this day. Wait; I'll send for Mustapha. Hope he's not engaged, for we must go over into Stamboul, and I do not fancy visiting that place without a good guide and interpreter."

"I should say not!" exclaimed Dick. "If ever there was a place just made to get lost in it's Stamboul, with its maze of narrow, crooked, unnamed streets and unnumbered houses."

"Correct, pard," agreed Brad. "I can get lost quicker and a heap sight worse in Stamboul than on a trackless desert. We sure must take a dragoman if we're going to amble over there."

So the black Nubian, who seemed always waiting for a call, was summoned and instructed to send out for the dragoman engaged by Dick on their arrival, to pilot them from the steamer to their hotel.

In less than thirty minutes Mustapha appeared, salaming in true Turkish

fashion, the tassel of his fez sweeping the floor.

"I here, effendi," he said, addressing the professor. "What you haf of me?"

"We want to visit Stamboul."

"I good dragoman. I guide you, effendi."

"Our purpose is to see the great underground cistern sometimes called the Underground Palace."

"Effendi, go not! Keep from there!" Mustapha showed great concern.

"Why should we not go there?" questioned the professor. "It is one of the great sights."

"You haf for your life some valuement?"

"Certainly; but what can there be dangerous about a visit to the Underground Palace?"

"Maybe you haf not hear it, effendi?"

"Have not heard what?"

"One time some Engleeshman go there. They nefer come back."

"What happened to them?"

Mustapha made a gesture with his hands indicative of vanishing into the air.

"Who answer it the question?" he said.

"Well, well!" muttered Zenas. "What do you think about this matter, boys?"

"My interest is aroused now," answered Dick. "I want to see this mysterious place."

"That's right, pard. I'm sure some wrought up to see it myself. Of course we'll go."

"Too young to haf wisdom," said Mustapha, with a gesture toward the boys.

"Come on, professor!" cried Dick. "If this dragoman will not act as guide for us, we can easily secure another."

Instantly Mustapha hastened to assure them that he would be only too glad to act as their guide; but that they should pay him before visiting the Underground Palace, as they might never return, in which case he would lose his honestly earned due by neglecting to collect ahead.

They agreed to pay him in advance, and soon they set out from the hotel in Pera, eager to see the mysterious place that was said to hold so much of mystery and danger.

In the afternoon sunshine Stamboul was magnificent when seen from a distance. But when they had crossed the Golden Horn and plunged into the city all its impressiveness vanished. At intervals they came upon some splendid mosques, but mosques were far more impressive when seen from the proper distance.

Mustapha knew his business, and he conducted them to the place where they could descend and inspect the Underground Palace, but he declined to enter

with them. For that purpose he called another man, with close-set, shifty eyes and a thin-lipped mouth.

"This dragoman, Bayazid," he said. "He tak' you."

"Is he trustworthy?" asked the professor, with a slight show of nervousness.

"You not find one more so, effendi."

So Bayazid, or "Pigeon," as he was called in English, was engaged to show them the Underground Palace.

"I haf very good boat, effendi," he declared.

"Whatever is that?" asked Buckhart. "Do we have to take a boat?"

"You will see," answered Zenas.

The entrance was somewhat like that of a sewer, but there were stone steps leading down into the darkness of the place. The guide found and lighted two torches, which it seemed were kept for the use of those who wished to visit the Palace.

"Say, this is some boogerish!" said Brad, as they found themselves in a dark and damp cemented passage.

"The old city was built above a huge system of cisterns," explained the professor. "Their purpose was to guard against a famine of water in time of war. Some of the old cisterns are dry now and are used by silk spinners. We shall visit one that still contains water."

"But I thought we were going to see a palace," said Dick, in disappointment.

"You shall see one—so called."

The passage echoed to their tread, while their voices came back hollowly, as if hidden imps were mocking them.

But the boys were quite unprepared for the spectacle that suddenly met their gaze. They came from the passage into a mighty vaulted chamber, stretching away into an unknown distance and filled with a shadowy maze of marble columns, row on row. The floor of this wonderful place was smooth as a mirror and seemed black as ebony, save where the light of the torches fell on it. There it glittered, and gleamed, and shimmered.

Exclamations of astonishment and wonder broke from the lips of the two lads. The professor grasped them, one with either hand, and stopped them abruptly.

"We can't go farther on foot," he said.

"Eh? Why not?" asked the Texan, in surprise. "Look at that floor! Wouldn't it be great to dance on! It's smooth as glass and——"

"You would get your feet wet if you attempted to dance on that," declared Zenas.

"What? Why—why, it's water!"

"Exactly."

"But—but it looks black everywhere except where the light strikes directly on it."

"Because no other ray of light reaches this place."

Dick stooped and dipped his hand in the water, which reached to their very feet.

"Well, this is worth seeing!" he declared.

"This was constructed by Constantine more than fifteen hundred years ago," explained the professor. "Think, boys, what you now behold is the work of man, yet it remains practically the same as when constructed fifteen centuries ago."

"It looks like a partly submerged cathedral," murmured Dick. "One can fancy all its worshipers and priests as drowned in that flood of black water. In fancy I seem to see their restless spirits floating above the surface of the lake, away, away yonder in the unknown distance. How large is it, professor?"

"There are three hundred and thirty-six of those marble columns, arranged in twenty-eight rows. I fancy the real reason why Mustapha refused to enter here is because of the many legends and tales told concerning the place. It is said that these vaults often echo to hollow laughter, and that the place is haunted by the ghosts of murdered sultans of past ages, whose places were usurped by the very monsters who intrigued to bring about the murders. Some claim that the spirits of the beautiful women destroyed by jealous sultans are doomed to float forever here above the surface of this buried lake, and that occasionally one of them is seen by a visitor for a single fleeting instant, then goes wailing and sobbing into the black distance."

"Well, by the great horn spoon, I don't know that I blame Mustapha for not coming here!" exclaimed Brad. "It's the most spooky old hole I ever struck."

At this juncture Bayazid inquired if they wished to take a boat and venture out a short distance on the water.

"Certainly," answered Dick, at once. "I think it will be a novel experience, and I want to go. If Brad does not——"

"Hold on, pard!" cried the Texan. "Wherever you go I go, you bet your boots! Mebbe I don't like it a heap, but I'm with you."

Bayazid left them and moved a short distance to the right. They watched him and saw the light of his torch fall on a black boat that lay motionless at the edge of the black lake. He stepped into the boat and soon brought it to the shore at their feet.

Dick and Brad followed the professor into the boat, which was large enough to accommodate two more persons, if the party had included them.

Bayazid had placed his torch in a socket that seemed arranged for it. He suggested that the others should extinguish theirs, as too much light close at hand would blind them, instead of making it possible for them to see better.

They accepted his suggestion, and slowly the boat slipped out upon the bosom of the soundless lake.

Suddenly there was a whirring rush through the air, and something brushed past the head of the professor, who uttered a squawk of alarm, struck out wildly with both hands and fell over backward off his seat to flounder in the bottom of the boat.

"Howling tornadoes!" gasped Buckhart. "Whatever was that?"

"A bat, effendi," answered Bayazid.

Dick laughed.

"Goodness!" palpitated the professor, as he finally struggled up to his seat. "I confess it did frighten me, boys. Made me think of those restless ghosts which are said to wander forever above the bosom of this lake. Hadn't we better go back?"

"Which way shall we go?" asked Dick.

They looked around. On every hand they saw nothing but marble pillars, shadows, and grim darkness.

"Waugh!" muttered the Texan. "I confess I couldn't follow the back trail."

"But Bayazid knows the way, don't you, Bayazid?" anxiously asked the professor.

"I know it, effendi," was the assurance. "Trust me."

"I—I'm very glad you do!" breathed Zenas. "I think we will return at once."

But Dick urged that they should go on a little farther, as Bayazid was thoroughly familiar with the place and there was no danger that they would become lost.

Brad always stuck by Dick, and the two overruled the old pedagogue.

Therefore Bayazid paddled slowly on. Had they seen his face they might have become suspicious and alarmed, but the shadows hid the crafty and treacherous look his countenance wore.

Finally they paused again, amid the labyrinth of pillars. Without the guide, not one of them could have told which course to follow in order to return to the point from which they started.

Suddenly Bayazid uttered an exclamation and stood up in the boat, staring into the darkness beyond his passengers.

Involuntarily the trio turned their heads to look, wondering what it could be that the guide saw.

Barely were their heads turned in that manner when the treacherous guide snatched the torch from its socket and plunged it into the water. There was a hissing sound and instant darkness.

CHAPTER VII—LOST ON THE BURIED LAKE

Dick Merriwell had brought along a revolver. He drew it in a moment and held it ready for use, expecting something to happen in the Stygian darkness of that terrible place.

Professor Gunn cried out to Bayazid, demanding to know the meaning of his act.

"Get hold of the onery varmint!" advised Buckhart. "Let me put my paws on him!"

The Texan floundered about, rocking the boat somewhat.

"Be careful, Brad!" warned Dick. "You don't know what he will do! It may be intended for a joke, just to frighten us, and it may be intended for something else. I have a pistol. Keep away from him and let me do the business."

"Pup-pup-perhaps it's pup-pup-part of the regular pup-pup-programme," chattered Professor Gunn. "Pup-pup-perhaps they always pup-pup-put out the tut-tut-torch when they have pup-pup-passengers on this old underground pup-pup-pond."

"Be quiet," directed Dick. "Bayazid."

He called to the guide, but there was no answer.

"Bayazid!"

Again he called. His voice echoed hollowly in the unseen arches above their heads.

"Why doesn't the blame fool answer?" growled Buckhart.

"Strike a match, Brad," directed Dick. "I'm holding my revolver ready for use, and I'll shoot, if necessary, the moment I can see what to shoot at."

The Texan lost little time in producing a match, but when he attempted to strike it he failed, the brimstone breaking off. Three matches were used before one burned. The light flared up, Buckhart holding it above his head. Its glow fell on the old professor and the two boys, and simultaneously they made an amazing discovery.

They were alone in the boat!

Bayazid, the guide, had disappeared!

Dick had his revolver ready for action, and he was standing in a half-crouching position, peering over the head of Buckhart at the place in the boat lately occupied by the guide.

"He's gug-gone!" gasped Zenas.

Brad dropped the match, and again they were buried in darkness which seemed to oppress them like an awful weight.

"Great catamounts!" said a voice that sounded strange and husky, but which Dick recognized as that of the Texan. "Where has he gone? What does it mean, partner?"

"It means that we are the victims of trickery of some sort," answered Dick, speaking in a low tone.

"It means that we are deserted to perish on the bosom of this awful buried lake!" came from the professor, in something like a moan. "I am to blame! I brought you here!"

"But whatever could be the object?" questioned Brad, in a puzzled tone. "If it's robbery——"

"It's a plot—a plot, boys! We are objects of suspicion. That agent of the secret police suspected us of something. In this awful city to be suspected is to be doomed."

"I can't realize it yet," muttered Dick. "How could the guide get out of the boat?"

"I'll strike another match, pard," said the Texan. "Keep your gun ready for use."

"There are other torches," reminded Dick. "We placed them in the bottom of the boat. Find them, Brad, and light one."

During the interval that followed the Texan was heard feeling about the bottom of the boat. After a time he confessed:

"I can't seem to get my paws on them. I'll have to use another match. The light will show us where they are."

Another match was lighted, but, though it was held and moved about to illumine the bottom of the boat, not a torch was discovered. When they realized that the extinguished torches were gone they sat up and looked into one another's eyes by the last gleams of the exhausted match, which Buckhart held until the blaze scorched his fingers.

For some moments silence followed.

Floating there on the motionless bosom of that black lake, no sound came down to them from the great city overhead. The stillness was appalling, yet all feared to speak, dreading the sound of their own voices.

Finally Dick asked:

"How many matches have you, Brad?"

"Not over four or five more."

"And I have none. How about you, professor—have you any?"

"Not one," was the despairing answer.

Suddenly Buckhart grated:

"I'd like to get my paws on the treacherous dog who deserted us in this fix! I'd certain fit him for a funeral! You hear me affirm!"

"I'm still unable to account for his action," said Dick. "If his object is robbery, surely he has taken a strange way to go about it."

"Perhaps he's counting on frightening us good and plenty," observed Brad. "Mebbe when he thinks we're so frightened that we'll be glad to cough up liberal he will appear and offer to conduct us back to the outer world."

"Let's call to him," eagerly suggested the professor. Then he lifted his voice and called loudly.

When he had repeated the cry three times, they listened.

"Didn't you hear a distant answer?" asked Dick.

"I judge whatever we heard was an echo," said Brad.

After a time they lifted their voices in a united shout, and then listened to the mocking echoes which fled from pillar to pillar and died in the unknown distance.

"No use!" moaned Professor Gunn. "I am satisfied that we are doomed! We'll never leave this place alive, and our fate will forever remain a mystery!"

"I'm sure that was no echo!" exclaimed Dick, as far away in the darkness they seemed to hear an answer to their repeated shouts. "Be still and let me shout."

When he had lifted his strong, clear voice all hushed their breathing and listened.

There was a short interval, and then out of the black distance came a faint, far-away answer.

"Some one did shout, pard!" exclaimed the Texan. "It's a dead-sure thing!"

Excitedly they all joined in the hail that followed. The answer was more distinct.

Dick had found an oar, and he slowly propelled the boat in the direction from which the answering cries seemed to come. Occasionally they bumped against the marble pillars, but these collisions did no damage.

Soon they could hear the answers to their cries and knew they were drawing nearer to the unknown person or persons who were thus responding.

Suddenly a tiny gleam of light showed amid the pillars at some distance.

"Looks like that's a match, pard," observed Buckhart. "I reckon I'll strike one, too."

He did so, but the other light disappeared even as he held his own above his head. Apparently his match was seen, for the voice of a man reached them, urging them to come in that direction.

By answering call for call they continued to draw nearer to the strangers, for they soon heard enough to satisfy them that at least two persons besides themselves were afloat on the bosom of that buried lake.

"One is a woman!" asserted Dick.

Lifting his voice, he asked:

"Who are you?"

"We are Americans. Who are yo'?"

"We are Americans, too."

"What are yo' doing here?"

"We are lost—deserted by our guide."

"So are we. How many of yo' are there?"

"Three. How many of you?"

"Two; and somebody shall suffer fo' this outrage! Somebody shall pay the penalty fo' it! I'll have satisfaction as sho' 's my name is——"

"Major Mowbry Fitts, of Natchez, Mississippi," finished Dick.

"That's my name, suh! But yo', suh—why, is it possible that yo' are——"

"Professor Zenas Gunn, accompanied by Dick Merriwell and Brad Buckhart. Is Miss Ketchum, of Boston, with you?"

"I am here," answered the well-known voice of Sarah Ann. "We have passed through a most awful and excruciating experience, the faintest remembrance of which will forever seem like a fearful nightmare. I am glad you have found us, for now you can assist us in getting out of this frightful place."

"I am sure we would like to do so," said Dick; "but, unfortunately, like yourselves, we do not know which way to turn. How did you get here?"

The major explained as the two boats bumped together, and floated thus. Like the professor and the boys, he and Miss Ketchum had visited the lake in company with a guide, who had vanished in a mysterious and unaccountable manner. They fancied they had been afloat for days on the bosom of the lake, and they were in a pitiful condition of collapse and fright, although the major had braced up wonderfully for a time.

"This seems to be the usual manner of treating visitors," said Dick.

"We've used our last match," said the major. "I lighted it a few minutes ago. We had been saving it. I am afraid we will never be able to escape. I have about given up hope."

"It is the work of that terrible Turk who urged you into the duel with Professor Gunn, major," said the woman from Boston. "He warned us to leave Constantinople, but we refused to go, and he told us we would disappear mysteri-

ously."

"Are you speaking of Aziz Achmet?" asked Dick.

"That is what he calls himself."

"Then you have seen him since the morning of the duel?"

"Seen him!" indignantly exclaimed the major. "We have seen him everywhere, suh. He has followed us and watched us wherever we went. We couldn't make a move that he wouldn't turn up. Twice he told us that we must leave the city and the country."

"I wish now," confessed Miss Ketchum, "that we had obeyed him. Don't you, major?"

"Well," answered the little man, with a touch of reluctance in his voice, "I must confess, madam, that I believe it would have been much better fo' us if we had obeyed."

Barely were these words spoken when, in the pall of darkness near by, a voice demanded:

"Are you ready to depart now? Will you depart at once? Do you, one and all, swear by your God that you will lose no time about going?".

Needless to say, the sound of that voice affected them all much like a sudden clap of thunder on a clear and sunny day. The woman gave a little scream, the major uttered a smothered oath, the professor gasped for breath, while both Dick and Brad sat bolt upright, their nerves tense.

"Answer at once!" commanded the unseen speaker. "It is your only hope of escaping. Among the Armenians we have enough so-called missionaries, and, therefore, the woman from Boston is not wanted. In the other boat are the old man and the boys against whom the secret police have been warned. It will be easy to cause all of you to vanish from the face of the earth; yet if you pledge yourselves to leave Turkey, you shall be spared."

"I tell you one thing," spluttered Zenas Gunn eagerly, "I've seen all of Turkey I care to see, and I'll give you my pledge to leave within twenty-four hours, taking the boys with me."

"I'll go—oh, I'll go!" promised Miss Ketchum.

"And if she goes," said Major Fitts, "I shall accompany her."

"Swear it!"

The trio were willing enough to do so.

A few moments later a light gleamed a short distance away, and then three torches were lighted. Within twenty feet of them was another and larger boat, containing four persons, three of whom were guides. The fourth was Aziz Achmet. One of the guides was Bayazid, who grinned at the professor and the boys, as if he thought the whole thing a fine joke. Another was the guide who had accompanied the major and the woman from Boston.

Achmet did not touch an oar. He sat in dignified silence as his companions slowly brought the boat close to the others.

"Mr. Achmet," said Dick, "although we dislike to leave Constantinople under compulsion, Professor Gunn has given his pledge, and we shall stand by it. There is one thing, however, that we would like to have explained. How did our guide disappear in such a mysterious manner?"

Achmet shrugged his shoulders a bit. At first he seemed disinclined to answer, but apparently he suddenly decided to do so.

"It was very simple, boy," he said. "Your guide stepped from your boat into this one, which he had seen floating in the shadow of a pillar. I was in this boat, with these other guides, and I gave him a signal that he understood. Immediately he extinguished the torch. That threw you into confusion. This boat silently approached, and Bayazid stepped into it. In the same manner Yapouly left the other boat."

"Thank you," said Dick. "It was altogether too easy!"

"A heap!" growled Buckhart.

CHAPTER VIII—ON THE WAY TO DAMASCUS

They succeeded in securing passage on a steamer that left the port the following day. Major Fitts and Miss Ketchum left by the same steamer.

"I hope yo' will congratulate me, professor," said the major, as proud as a peacock. "Miss Ketchum has consented to become Mrs. Fitts as soon as we reach the United States. I'm sorry fo' yo', suh; but yo' never really had a show, suh."

"That's right, major," smiled Dick. "He didn't have a show, because he is already——"

"Don't you dare tell I'm married!" hissed Zenas, in the boy's ear.

"He is all ready to carry out his plan to penetrate the wilds of Africa, where it would be impossible for him to take a bride, and he could not bear to be parted from one so young and charming as Miss Ketchum, were he to have the good fortune to capture her."

"Saved your life, you rascal!" whispered Zenas, and then hastened to bow

low to the coy and confused lady from Boston.

At Beirut the party split up, the professor and the boys going to Damascus, a distance of ninety-one miles, which was covered by an excellent narrow-gauge railroad, built by Swiss engineers.

"We're off, boys!" cheerfully exclaimed the professor, as the train finally started. "We'll soon be in the oldest city in the world."

"Do you mean Damascus, professor?" inquired Dick.

"Of course I mean Damascus! We're not bound for any other place, are we? Did you think I meant New York? Did you fancy I was speaking of Hoboken? Hum! Haw!"

"But there is no absolute proof that Damascus is the oldest city in the world. There may be older cities in China or India."

"There may be," admitted the old pedagogue; "but we do not know about them. At least, Damascus is the oldest city we know anything about."

"That is quite true. If you had said that——"

"Now look here, Richard, you are inclined to be altogether too wise. You keep yourself too well posted about the countries and places we visit, and thus you deprive me of the privilege of imparting information to you. It isn't right. You make me feel that I am not earning my stipend as your guardian and tutor during this trip round the world. You place me in an embarrassing position. I wish you would feign ignorance, if you cannot do anything else."

Dick laughed.

"All right, professor; I'll try to reform. But it was your advice to us that we should post ourselves in advance on each place we visited, and I've been obeying instructions, that's all."

"Haw! Hum! You're inclined to be too obedient—altogether too obedient. Now here is Bradley—I haven't observed that he has wasted much time reading up about different countries and cities."

"Sure not," admitted the Texan. "It's a heap too much trouble, for I know I'll hear about the places from you and Dick when we hit 'em. This yere country sort of looks familiar."

"It does," nodded Dick. "To me it looks like Southern Colorado or Northern New Mexico. It's a land of irrigation. The mountains, the plains, the foliage, the mud houses, everything but the people, remind me of that portion of our own country."

"Quite true," agreed Zenas Gunn; "although the fertile spots here have all been taken up and cultivated. For instance, look there, boys—look at that mountainside."

Gazing from the window as the train sped along, they could see the side of a mountain walled up in terraces like gigantic stairways, to prevent the soil from

being washed away by the rainfalls. These terraces were planted with grapes, figs, olive and mulberry trees. On many of these terraces laborers were at work propping up strange-looking trunks, which were six or seven feet high. In places these trunks could be seen reclining in rows on the ground, looking strangely like sleeping soldiers.

"Those are grapevines," exclaimed the professor. "In the fall they cut them down to that height and lay them flat on the ground, as you see them. They are now beginning to prop them up. They will be irrigated and dressed, and then new branches will shoot out in all directions and cover the soil and bear fruit."

As the train wound in and out of the gorges, clinging to the mountainsides, they beheld many strange and interesting things. Laborers were setting out mulberry trees in long trenches. Other laborers were digging the trenches, three men working a single shovel. One of the men manipulated the shovel, holding the handle and driving it down into the soil. Two others lifted it out with its load, doing so by pulling at ropes attached to the shovel just above the blade. They all worked together with astonishing ease and skill. Great hedges of cactus stretched along the railroad in many places. They gazed with interest at the old-fashioned irrigating canals. They beheld men plowing with the same sort of crooked stick that was used for that purpose in Bible times. But there were no farmhouses scattered over the country, for the people still lived in villages, as they did in former days, when it was necessary for neighbors to band together for protection.

For a great portion of the way the railroad followed the old caravan trail, and all along this trail were scattered trains of camels and donkeys, loaded with all kinds of goods, such as silk, cotton, grain, machinery, poplar trees, fuel, and other things. Petroleum, however, seemed to form the greater portion of many a cargo.

The sun shone from a cloudless sky.

Brad Buckhart was strangely silent. He gazed out of the window in an abstracted manner, paying very little attention to what the professor and Dick were saying.

Finally Dick began to joke him about his unusual manner.

"Don't worry, Brad," he laughed. "We'll overtake her soon. We may find her in Damascus."

"Her?" grunted the Texan.

"Yes."

"Why, who——"

"Nadia Budthorne, of course. Her last letter told you she would visit Damascus and then proceed to Jerusalem, in company with her brother. You can't fool me, old man. You have been counting on overtaking her somewhere in the Holy Land. Don't deny it."

"All right," said Buckhart, his face flushed, but his manner a bit defiant; "I won't deny it, Mr. Smarty. You sure have hit it all right. I——"

At this moment the whistle of the locomotive shrieked a wild alarm and the brakes were applied violently. Something was wrong. The train came to a stop.

And just outside the window of the compartment occupied by the old professor and two boys a dead camel lay stretched on the ground, blood flowing from several horrible wounds. The animal's pack was broken open and the goods scattered in all directions.

Not ten feet from the camel lay a gorgeously dressed, black-bearded Arab, likewise apparently dead.

"Whoop!" cried Buckhart. "There certain have been some doings here! I opine the camel tried to butt the train off the track, somewhat to the grief of Mr. Camel."

Men now came running toward the spot, all greatly excited. They were principally camel drivers and like men from a caravan. They gathered about the prostrate Arab and made a great demonstration. Their gestures toward the train were very threatening.

One of the guards flung open the door of the compartment occupied by our friends.

"Is there a doctor here?" he asked anxiously. "A serious accident has happened."

In a moment Dick Merriwell sprang out, followed by Brad. They did not wait to enter into conversation with the guard, but started toward the dead camel and the motionless Arab.

Others from the train were doing the same thing, and the boys learned from fragments of conversation that the Arab had been struck by the engine while endeavoring to drive from the track the camel that had strayed onto the railroad and obstinately refused to budge.

At that point the train came round a sharp curve, and the engineer was unable to see either camel or man until right upon them.

Later the boys learned that the camel was loaded with certain articles of great importance, which had led the Arab to imperil his life in the effort to drive the beast from the track.

"He seems to be some sort of high mogul in his tribe," observed Buckhart, as he and Dick paused and surveyed the injured man.

"He is a sheik of great power and influence," explained a man standing near. "That is why the railroad people are so concerned. If he were an ordinary camel driver or donkey man, they wouldn't stop a minute to bother over him."

"I wonder if he is really dead?" muttered Dick, stepping forward.

In a moment he was kneeling beside the unconscious man. Deftly he began

to make an examination, seeking for broken bones.

A number of Arabs were about, their heads tied up and their feet and legs bare, as is their custom in all sorts of weather. One of these objected when Dick began the examination, but a husky fellow prevented the chap from attacking the American boy.

"I don't believe he is dead," declared Dick. "Doesn't seem to have any broken bones. He's stunned—just has the breath knocked out of him. Give me a hand, Brad; let's see if we can't revive him."

The Texan responded promptly.

"What do you want me to do, pard?" he inquired.

"We'll try artificial respiration," said Merriwell. "You work his lungs while I work his arms."

What followed caused the wildest excitement among the watching Arabs, for Buckhart knelt astride the body of the old sheik and began a regular and steady pumplike movement on the lower part of his breast, while Dick seized the man's arms, pulled them at full length above the Arab's head, then bent them back suddenly and pressed them to his sides. The two boys worked together in perfect unison.

Some of the Arabs cried out that the infidels were defiling the dead. Two or three of them drew weapons and would have rushed on the boys; but the same husky fellow, who had checked them before now, produced a pistol and averred that he would "blow daylight" through the whole of them if they did not keep still.

In this manner they were temporarily checked, and that brief check gave Merriwell time enough to accomplish his purpose.

A low moan and a convulsive gasp came from the lips of the man over which the boys were working. Signs of returning consciousness were pronounced. His breast heaved. The boys ceased their work. For he breathed.

An Englishman held out a flask of whisky.

"Give him a swallow of this," he advised.

Dick pushed it away.

"Water," he called. "That will be better for him."

"Allah! Allah!" cried the astounded Arabs. "The infidels are magicians! They have restored the dead to life! Ras al Had lives again!"

Some of them prostrated themselves in the dust. Others hastened to bring water.

Dick took a canteen and turned a little of the liquid between the lips of the injured man. He swallowed it greedily, coughed a little, and then lay gazing in a puzzled manner at the face of the American boy.

Finally, in very good English, he asked what had happened. His voice was

weak and husky, yet his words were plain.

"You were struck by the train," explained Merriwell. "Your camel was killed, and you seemed to be dead; but I think you are all right now."

"For which you may thank this boy and his friend here," said the husky chap, who had protected the boys. "To all appearances, you were as dead as old Mohammed; but they pumped the breath back into you in a hurry."

Several of the Arabs now brought cushions, which were placed beneath the head and shoulders of the sheik. One of them spoke to him hurriedly in a low tone, and seemed telling him all about what had taken place. When this man had finished speaking the sheik made a gesture with his hand and bade him retire.

He then called for Dick.

"Be careful, Richard," cautioned Professor Gunn. "These men are treacherous. There's no telling what he means to do."

Dick laughed and stepped nearer to the sheik.

"Boy," said the old Arab, "they tell me that I was dead, and by your infidel magic you brought life back into my body."

"You were unconscious, that was all. The shock had driven the breath from your body, and we simply revived the action of your lungs."

"Had you not done so——"

"You sure would have croaked for fair," put in Buckhart.

"What you ask of me, if it is in my power, I will give," declared the sheik. "That is the word of Ras al Had, and, though no pledge to an infidel is binding, may the wrath of Allah fall on me if I break this one. Speak."

"If you think I did it for pay of any sort, you are mistaken," said the young American, with a touch of resentment. "You can't reward me for a thing like that."

"Then if ever you are in need or in danger, and I can be of service, the sword and the life of Ras al Had shall be at your command. I swear this by the beard of the Prophet!"

"All aboard!" shouted a voice. "Train's going to start."

There was a general rush for the cars.

CHAPTER IX—THE STRUGGLE AT THE STATION

"Well, that certain was an adventure, all right," laughed Brad, when they were again seated in their compartment and the train was moving.

"I don't know what I'll do with you boys!" exclaimed Professor Gunn, with an air of exasperation. "You keep me on pins and needles all the time. I surely thought those Arabs would slice you up when they saw you go after the old sheik. They thought you were defiling the dead."

"But the old boy was grateful when he learned that we had pumped the breath back into him," said Dick.

"He pretended to be," nodded the professor; "but that is no sign."

"Why not?"

"He's a Mohammedan, and they think it no harm to do anything to an infidel. They may deceive him, lie to him, steal from him, even kill him, without committing a sin. Richard, do not take any stock in the words of that old rascal."

"I don't have to," said young Merriwell; "for it is not likely I'll ever see him again. All the same, I seemed to feel that he was sincere when he expressed his gratitude."

"It's evident he's a gent of some authority in his tribe," put in Brad. "All the rest of his particular bunch seemed to stand in awe of him a plenty."

Their interest in the strange country, together with their recent adventure, gave them food enough for conversation, and the journey was not nearly as long as they had expected it would seem.

At last, as the train approached Damascus, they found themselves in a narrow valley that was almost a gorge. Through this valley a clear stream rushed and roared over an exceedingly rocky bed. This stream drove a number of mills, the entrances to which were always surrounded by donkeys and camels, these animals having brought little loads of grain to the mills to be ground.

On the outskirts of the city they passed a group of Turkish villas, which looked very picturesque and attractive. These, they were told, were occupied by exiled officers of the Turkish government, who had committed offenses of some sort or had excited the distrust of the sultan. Instead of ordering them beheaded, their imperial master had sent them to Damascus, where they could be closely guarded.

Finally the train drew into the station at Damascus.

"Say, just have a look!" cried Brad. "I opine the whole town has turned out to meet us."

There was a great crowd at the station—Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians, Turks, Jews, Greeks, Egyptians, and people from many desert tribes. They were all in a great tumult and uproar. A fence prevented them from crowding close to the track, but behind this fence they were packed thick as sardines in a box, staring, talking, pushing, gesticulating, and making a great hubbub.

"I wonder if this is the usual thing," said Dick. "Perhaps some noted person is on this train."

"Not likely that has brought them here," declared the professor. "The arrival of a train is an event, and probably all the idle men in town rush to the station to see it come in."

Their compartment door was flung open.

With alacrity the two boys descended to the platform.

"There they are!" cried a familiar voice that gave Buckhart a thrill.

"Oh, Dick! Hey, Brad!" called another voice.

Dick located the person who called to him. He grasped Buckhart's arm and pointed.

"There they are—Budthorne and his sister!" he exclaimed.

In the midst of the crowd beyond the fence, being jostled about by the swaying mob, were Dunbar Budthorne and Nadia, whom they had last seen in Italy.

Professor Gunn was calling to the boys.

"Hold on, you kittenish young rascals!" he croaked. "Don't be in such a hurry. Help look after this baggage."

But the professor was forgotten in the excitement of what followed. Dick saw the wild crowd separate Dunbar Budthorne and his sister. He saw the two forced apart. Nadia was whirled aside. Then two men grasped her, one placing a dusky hand over her mouth to prevent her from shouting, while she was swept off her feet and literally borne away.

Dick shouted to Brad. He made a rush for the fence. Up into the air he sailed in a great leap that carried him over the obstruction and into the midst of the crowd.

The American boy seemed like an infuriated animal, for he hurled people to the right and left like one possessing the strength of a giant. He ripped a pathway through that crowd in a most amazing manner.

Nadia Budthorne was struggling vainly with her captors, who were on the point of lifting her into a carriage, when the American boy reached them.

Dick struck one man a blow that caused him to release the girl instantly.

But another swarthy fellow appeared and sought to seize the boy, while still one held fast to the girl.

Nadia, however, managed to get her mouth clear of the smothering hand that had been pressed over it.

She uttered a scream.

That cry was answered by a roar in the voice of Brad Buckhart, who was fighting his way through the crowd.

As the second ruffian reached for him, Dick managed by an agile twist and dodge to escape the fellow's hand. Then he tripped the man and went at the one

who was seeking to force Nadia into the carriage.

"Drop her, you cur!" he palpitated.

This fellow, who was the biggest one of the trio, flung the girl into the arms of yet another, then whirled on Dick, whipping out a knife.

The giant made a quick, forward, ripping stroke with the knife.

Again Merriwell's quickness on his feet saved him, for he squirmed aside so that the blade of the knife simply pierced the loose part of his coat that swung from him when he made that rapid movement.

The next instant Dick seized the dark man's hand with his left hand, held it firm, struck sharply with the lower edge of his right hand, which landed on the other's wrist.

That man's wrist was broken as if it had been a pipestem, and the knife fell to the ground.

Dick had broken it by a trick, knowing just exactly how to accomplish the feat.

A howl rose from the wretch, but the boy gave him no further attention.

He turned to look for Nadia.

Fortunately Brad Buckhart had reached the girl and in an encounter of this sort the Texan was second only to Dick Merriwell. In fact, Brad fought with more slashing fury than did Dick, but not with the same quick wit and instant decision on the right course to pursue.

The Texan had proved assistance enough, however, for he had rescued Nadia and knocked down the man who was seeking to force her into the carriage. The latter fell under the feet of the horses. The animals reared and trampled on him. He screamed, and the horses plunged away, the black driver apparently letting them go, instead of seeking to stop them.

The moment the carriage was gone the men who had attacked Nadia seemed to be swallowed by the crowd that surged round. The one with the broken wrist vanished, and even the fellow who had been trampled by the horse could not be found. It was easy for the other two to disappear in the crowd, for any one of a hundred men there might have been taken for either of them.

Dunbar Budthorne, pale and shaking with excitement, finally reached his sister, finding her clinging to Brad, who was supporting her with one arm.

Dick was on the other side of Nadia.

"Sister!" exclaimed Dunbar huskily; "have those brutes——"

"I'm all right, brother," she hastened to declare. "They did handle me roughly, but——"

"The brutes!" he grated. "Is there no protection for respectable travelers in this wretched city? This is the third offense, and this was more outrageous than the others. I couldn't do a thing. Before I realized it the crowd had forced us

apart."

"It's fortunate Dick and Brad were able to reach me," she declared. "I was helpless in the hands of those black ruffians. I believe they would have forced me into that carriage and carried me off before all this crowd only for the boys."

Budthorne now shook hands with the boys, expressing his thanks and gratitude.

Buckhart was highly indignant over what had occurred, and he wanted to know why Dunbar had not appealed to the authorities for protection. Budthorne explained that he had appealed, but that foreigners were liable to insult anywhere in Damascus, and that often they were roughly treated.

This was true. The Moslems of that city are proud, but illiterate. They have come to know of the advancement of other peoples whom they regard as inferior, and they resent it. For four thousand years Damascus occupied an important position in the world, but now it is a place of very little importance, much to the indignation of its citizens.

But Budthorne knew the treatment accorded himself and his sister did not arise wholly from the fact that they were foreigners. There was another reason, which he explained later.

Professor Gunn came fluttering through the crowd, in a great state of agitation.

"Bless my soul! bless my soul!" he stammered. "This is dreadful! Is this thing going to continue wherever we go? If so, I'll just have to take these boys back home. It's scandalous! My nerves are completely upset!"

"Where is our baggage?" asked Dick.

"I had to leave it."

"Unguarded?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll be lucky if we ever see it again. Brad, stay with Nadia and Dunbar, while I go with the professor to look after that baggage."

Fortunately not a piece of the baggage had been stolen. Dick was clear-headed, and he soon learned what to do with it, although Zenas rendered absolutely no assistance. There was a German hotel in the city, and a representative of the house took charge of all the luggage after it was pointed out, assuring them that it would be taken to the hotel without delay. Another man escorted our friends through the crowd to a carriage that ran to the hotel.

Once in the carriage they breathed easier. Away they were whirled through the narrow streets of the strange, old city, leaving the station and the motley crowd behind.

The houses of Damascus are mainly of sun-dried clay with flat roofs, surrounded by low copings. This roof serves for many purposes. Often it is used as

a dining room, while during the hot summer months it serves as a bedroom at night. On warm evenings people sit on the housetops to enjoy the air. When the muezzin appears on the balcony of a minaret hundreds upon hundreds of faithful Moslems mount to their housetops and go through the gymnastic contortions of Mohammedan worship.

But not all the buildings of Damascus are low and flat-roofed. There are some towers, and temples, and minarets, besides a few modern buildings, with roofs of bright corrugated iron, which glisten in the sunshine.

Compared with most American cities, Damascus lacks trees and foliage. Compared with the desert surrounding it, however, it is a perfect bower of shade and rest.

A look of disappointment crept over the face of Brad Buckhart as he gazed around him on the way from the station to the hotel.

"I opine this is the worst part of Damascus?" he observed.

"On the contrary," said Dunbar Budthorne, "it is far from being the worst part. This is quite respectable—almost swell, to use a vulgar word."

"Well, I certain am a plenty disappointed," muttered the Texan. "She isn't just as I expected her to be."

Dick questioned Dunbar about the annoyance to which he and Nadia had been subjected since arriving in the city.

"I may as well tell the cause of it," said Budthorne, although Nadia showed confusion and shook her head warningly. "It's all right, sister. You were not to blame."

Brad wondered at her confusion and detected her in the act of casting a glance of apprehension toward him.

"On the steamer coming from Smyrna to Beirut," said Dunbar, "we chanced to meet a very handsome and distinguished-appearing Turkish gentleman, who was called Hafsa Pasha. Although scarcely more than thirty years of age, he had traveled a great deal and had spent two years in the United States. He was educated, cultured, refined in manner, and a splendid traveling companion. Both Nadia and myself enjoyed his company very much. He told us he was bound for Damascus on business that concerned the Turkish government. He had been here before, and, therefore, he was able to give us much information of value and save us many petty annoyances.

"I confess that we both became exceedingly interested in this man. He was a scholar and could quote Shakespeare and Burns—even Longfellow! I think he had read Byron, but he confessed a natural prejudice for the great English poet who became the idol of Greece.

"At first neither Nadia nor I saw anything offensive in his manners. True, he was inclined to quote Burns to Nadia whenever he could find the opportunity,

but she thought nothing of that until he made love to her pointblank."

Buckhart gurgled a little deep down in his throat.

"Then," continued Budthorne, "Nadia began to grow alarmed. She tried to avoid him, but every way she turned he seemed to bob up before her. She tried to keep him at a distance without offending him. Before we reached Beirut he proposed outright."

Again Buckhart gurgled.

"He would not take no for an answer. In every way possible he sought to induce her to consider his proposal. At last he seemed to lose control of himself. In an hour we would be in Beirut. He found her alone on the after deck. I came up just in time to see him catch her in his arms and try to kiss her. We had an encounter, and I confess that he got rather the best of it, although I hit him in the face. That blow seemed to arouse a sleeping savage in him, for he cursed me and called me a dog of an infidel, swearing he would make me weep drops of blood for that insult.

"Well, we hastened out of Beirut and away to Damascus; but the day after we reached this city Hafsa Pasha appeared. His manner seemed again altered, and he was very polite and humble. He entreated pardon and begged to have an interview with Nadia. She declined to see him. Before he left, he laughingly told me that she would have to see him before she could get out of this city.

"That was our first annoyance in Damascus. The following day we were shopping in the bazaars when suddenly Hafsa Pasha and a number of men surrounded us. I was jostled aside. Hafsa Pasha talked to Nadia like a man deranged. He tried to plead with her, he offered her wealth and position, and then he threatened. I don't know what might have happened, but a party of English tourists came along and I appealed to them. There came near being a free fight in that bazaar, but the Turk and his followers finally retired and the Englishmen escorted us back to the hotel.

"Then came the letter that stated you would arrive in a day or two. We have been watching the trains since then, and that is how we happened to be at the station to-day. You know what happened. I am satisfied that Hafsa Pasha was the instigator of this assault upon us. It seems now that he actually contemplates carrying Nadia off by force. We must get out of Damascus right away, or I fear he will find a way to accomplish his evil purpose."

CHAPTER X—THE

GREEN-EYED MONSTER

Brad Buckhart was striding savagely up and down the room, taken by himself and Dick, at the hotel. There was a black look on his strong face and his square jaw was set.

"I suppose you'll have to walk it off old man," said Dick; "but it seems to me you are permitting yourself to become altogether too wrought up."

The Texan stopped, his feet wide apart and his hands on his hips.

"I certain can't help being some wrought up, partner," he said. "I reckon you would be in my place."

"Without doubt. But we are here now, and we'll look after Nadia. Hafsa Pasha's little scheme of abduction won't go."

"Sure not; but it wasn't that I was thinking of."

"It wasn't?"

"No."

"Well, then——"

"Budthorne let the cat out of the bag."

"I don't understand."

"He didn't make a clean breast of it when he first told the story. I've been talking with him since we arrived here at the hotel. I trapped him by asking questions."

"Why, what do you mean by saying you trapped him?"

"Exactly that, pard. You know a funny thing has been running in my head ever since I trapped him. It's a toast I heard once. This is it:

"'Here is to the love that lies
In a woman's eyes.
Yes, it lies and lies,
And keeps on lying.'"

Dick rose instantly and placed a hand on his chum's shoulder.

"Why, Brad!" he exclaimed, "I never knew you to talk so queerly. What did Budthorne tell you that set you into such a mood?"

"You're my friend. I wouldn't talk of it to any one else. You know I was smitten on Nadia Budthorne."

"Well?"

"Of course I was a chump to care for her."

"Oh, I don't know."

"Yes, I was. I'm a plain sort of chap, although I'm not half as wild and woolly as I pretend to be."

"You don't have to tell me that, old man. I've been able to see under the surface all along. I think I understand you."

"You do, Dick, and you're the only one. That's why I swear by you. That's why I'm ready to back you up in anything you do. There is a bond of sympathy between us."

The Texan had dropped his swagger and his Western style of speech. For the time being his mannerisms fell from him like a discarded garment.

"Go ahead and tell me what it was that Budthorne said."

"Why, he let it slip that both he and Nadia were greatly interested in this fine Turkish gentleman and that he encouraged her interest in him. In short, she carried on a mild flirtation with Hafsa Pasha, who rather dazzled her. Of course, I have no claim on her, and I'm too young to think of such a thing seriously. But she's seventeen, and lots of girls get married at that age. In this country they marry at ten and eleven."

"Great Scott! You don't fancy she actually seriously considered marrying the Turk?"

"Why, he's a very cultured gentleman. Budthorne said so. He is educated, and he has traveled extensively. Besides that, he is in the very prime of life. Such a man might dazzle the eyes of a young girl. There would be something romantic in a flirtation with him. She would be likely to dream of the splendor and power that would come to her as the wife of such a man. Don't call me a fool, Dick! I know! I know!"

"If you're not foolish, then you are crazy!"

"Only jealous, Dick. I confess it—I'm jealous! Never felt this way before. I have an awful feeling down here inside of me. I'd like to kill somebody!"

"But she threw Hafsa Pasha down, old man."

"After Budthorne was told by the captain of the ship that Hafsa Pasha had a harem in Damascus."

Merriwell gave a great start.

"Is that true?" he demanded.

"Budthorne confessed it."

"Budthorne's a fool!"

"Oh, we both knew all the time that he was weak. I think he encouraged Nadia in her flirtation with the Turk until he obtained that information from the captain. Then he got his eyes open and forbade her to have anything to do with the man."

"Nadia is young, Brad. Her ideas are not formed yet. You mustn't be too

hard on her. Even if she did flirt with the Turk a little, perhaps she was never serious."

"Perhaps not, but still I can't help thinking she was. Of course you may say she had a right to flirt mildly with the man. Perhaps she did. Still I had exalted her in my own mind. I regarded her as staunch and true. I thought her far superior to the foolish, frivolous modern girl. She knew how much I thought of her, and she pretended to care for me. But, like all of her sex, out of sight, out of mind. I was far away. Hafsa Pasha, the handsome Turk, was near. He quoted poetry to her. She listened and was enchanted. She forgot me. They all do. Dick, you're the only human being I ever knew who was staunch as the rock-ribbed hills. You never change, no matter what happens. All others are weak and vacillating. My confidence in human nature is pretty well shattered."

"Oh, rats!" cried Dick. "Don't get cynical, Brad! It doesn't become you at all. You're naturally the most optimistical chap in the world."

"What do you think I'm going to do?" harshly demanded the Texan. "Think I can ever feel the same toward that girl? Not much! If she hadn't learned that her old Turk was married, I'd be in the soup now. He's married, and so I'm good enough for her until she finds some chap she likes better. I tell you it's all off, Dick! I throw up the sponge! I quit!"

"I think this climate has got your liver out of condition," said Merriwell. "What you need is a tonic. You'll feel differently about this to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, nor the next day, nor ever!" declared Brad. "Miss Budthorne will find that I'm no chump to play second fiddle. Don't you dare laugh at me, Richard Merriwell! I'm in deadly earnest!"

Dick did not laugh then, but he found an opportunity when Buckhart was not present.

However, Buckhart was far more serious than his comrade imagined.

During the remainder of that day Brad wore a heavy grouch. He kept much by himself and avoided Nadia, much to her perplexity. Finally her pride was touched, and she made no further effort to speak with him or to see him.

Never had Dick seen his friend in such a mood. In vain he tried to jolly the Texan and cheer him up. A profound cloud of gloom overhung the sturdy chap from the Rio Pecos country.

All were more or less weary, and so they willingly rested through the day.

When evening came Dunbar Budthorne proposed that they should attend the one theatre of the city, which was located on the principal square, within a short distance of the hotel.

"What sort of a performance is given there?" questioned Dick.

"Oh, vaudeville, tumbling, fencing, juggling, acrobatic stunts, and so forth. It's rather dull as a performance, but it will serve to pass the time away."

"Is it a suitable place for your sister to visit?"

"Well, I don't know about that. I hear the men smoke until you may cut the atmosphere into chunks with a knife. The theatre is a rickety old shanty, and none too clean. We might leave Nadia here in the hotel."

"Don't do that!" she entreated. "Don't leave me alone in this city. I'm afraid to be left alone, after what has happened."

"Hum! ha!" coughed Professor Gunn. "I think we will omit the theatre. Evidently it is a low resort. I decline to permit the boys to visit it."

And, although they chaffed him about it, the old man was rigid in his decision, which finally settled it, and they did not attend the theatre in Damascus.

The following morning, however, they prepared to start out to look the city over. When they were ready to leave the hotel it was found that Buckhart had vanished.

On inquiry they learned that he had set out by himself, leaving word for them not to bother about him.

Nadia pouted and looked greatly disappointed.

"What is the matter with him?" she asked. "I think he's just as mean as can be! What makes him act so queer?"

She pinned Dick down and put the question to him, not a little to his dismay. He could not tell the truth, and he would not lie.

"I'll have to let him explain his own actions," he said, seeking to find a loophole of escape.

"But you know why he is so peculiar—I know you do! You can't deny it!"

"I won't try."

"Then you must tell me. I insist on it."

"Please don't, Nadia! It will be all right in time, but I prefer to let him explain."

After a while he induced her to drop the subject temporarily although he knew she would return to it at the first opportunity and seek, with all the intensity of her feminine curiosity, than which there is nothing more acute and prying, to compel him to divulge the truth.

Arouse the curiosity of a girl and she will strain every nerve to learn a secret, even though she knows the knowledge will make her most miserable. The only way to keep a secret from a girl is not to let her suspect a secret exists.

They left the hotel and proceeded to the public square, which is located near the centre of the city. This square proved to be a large, open place, where at that hour throngs of people of all nationalities and colors were assembling. The square was a sort of public market. In the centre was a fountain and monument.

All around the sides of the square were the little booths and stands of itinerant merchants, the most of them with their goods spread out on the ground before

them, and arranged in the most inviting manner their ingenuity could devise.

There were many professional letter writers, each one sitting at a desk under awnings of canvas or straw. They did not sit on chairs, but flat on the ground, with their legs crossed. They were supplied with wooden or reed pens. Their ink they carried in inkhorns.

Many of these letter writers were busy. Some were writing business communications, some were drawing up contracts or making out legal papers, while one, with a veiled woman sitting near him, was writing a love letter, recording the words whispered to him by the lips hidden behind the veil.

Within the square were carts, camels, saddle horses, carriages, and donkeys, all there to be hired.

Men were wandering about, sometimes in pairs and holding hands. This, Budthorne explained, was a common sight, it being an evidence of affection that was thought quite natural in Damascus.

Adjoining the square were several coffee shops, where Turkish men could be seen sitting round, smoking hookahs, sipping coffee, and playing checkers, chess, dominoes, and so forth. They wore long, calico gowns, and their heads were swathed in turbans.

"Look here," said Dick, motioning toward some passing camels. "See how oddly their owners decorate the beasts. They have strings of blue beads round their necks."

"You'll see that everywhere, on camels, horses, and donkeys," declared Budthorne. "Those strings of beads are charms to ward off the influence of the evil eye."

A strange sound smote their ears. It came from the open door of a little shop, and it made them shiver, for it was a sort of doleful wail and chant combined.

"Some one must be dying in there!" exclaimed Dick.

They looked in at the door. A young man was sitting cross-legged on the floor, busy at some sort of work.

He was singing!

Despite the distressing sounds he was emitting, this young man was very happy.

He was singing a love song!

The sound of clanging, clanking, and banging, as of many persons pounding tin pans and washboilers, came to their ears. A few moments later they found themselves at the beginning of the bazaars of the city. The sounds they had heard came from the coppersmith's street, where hundreds of skillful laborers were at work on brass, beating and molding it in to all sorts of shapes. They were making bowls, trays, and dishes, such as may be seen on sale in any genuine Oriental store.

It was very interesting to watch these laborers, and their skill was something to marvel at.

They wandered on through bazaar after bazaar, their interest and wonderment increasing.

One bazaar was filled with pipes and smoking paraphernalia of every description. There were pipes mounted with gold and silver, and some were decorated with precious stones.

Then came the leather shops, the cloth store, the curio shops, the place of odd and ancient weapons, the goldsmith's bazaar, and, most fascinating of all, the Street of the Greeks. In the latter place were to be seen all sorts of Oriental articles and ornaments, embroideries, rugs, carpets, silks, clothing, armors, weapons, pipes, gems, coins, fezzes.

They were besieged by Armenians, Greeks, and Jews, all anxious and eager to sell them goods. Only the Turks sat back in dignified silence and declined to solicit trade. Some of the dealers were offensive in their insistence. They pulled Nadia and held articles before her for inspection, dilating on the merits of the goods. They named prices and then asked for offers.

Budthorne became confused and Professor Gunn grew angry. Dick was compelled to look after Nadia. She clung to his arm.

In this manner they came face to face with Brad Buckhart, who was wandering through the bazaars alone.

Nadia gave a little cry.

"There's Brad!"

He turned like a flash and disappeared amid a mass of people who were crowding before one of the booths.

"Oh, Brad!" called Dick.

"Why, what made him do that?" exclaimed the girl, in dismay.

Merriwell was provoked.

"Come!" he urged. "He can't get away. We'll find him."

They hurried after the Texan. Dick caught a glimpse of him leaving the bazaars. Nadia was still clinging to Dick's arm.

At the beginning of a narrow street Buckhart paused and glanced back, then he turned and disappeared down the street.

Never had Dick known his friend to behave in such a perplexing manner.

"I'll shake some of the foolishness out of him if I ever get my hands on him," Merriwell mentally vowed.

Thinking they would have no trouble in returning to the bazaars and finding the professor and Dunbar, they hastened down the narrow street.

Turning a corner, they came against a caravan of loaded camels in a most sudden and startling manner. It was necessary to hug the wall in order to let the

animals and their drivers pass.

There were many dogs in the streets. These animals prowled about or slept serenely beneath the feet of pedestrians, who were careful to step over them or to turn out and go round without disturbing them.

As in Constantinople, the dogs were the street cleaners, and no one harmed them.

After following the crooked street some distance and failing to again catch a glimpse of Buckhart, Dick decided they had better turn back.

"I don't know how we could have missed him," he said.

"He may have turned onto another street."

"I saw no other street."

"I did."

Retracing their steps, they came upon a street that was like a choked alley. Nadia believed they could return to the bazaars more quickly by taking it.

But when they had followed it into still another street, and turned from this into yet another, she confessed that she was bewildered and knew not which course should be pursued.

Then Dick set out to make his way back as quickly as possible, the girl relying wholly on his judgment. They seemed entangled in a network of very crooked and very bewildering streets.

Again they were suddenly confronted by a number of loaded camels. The one in advance was heavily loaded, his pack being so broad that it nearly touched the walls on either side. The beast came swinging on.

Nadia uttered a cry of alarm and turned to run. She fled up some steps and disappeared within an open doorway.

Dick gave a gasp of dismay as he followed her, for he saw she had entered a Moslem temple, and he knew such an intrusion might produce an uproar.

He sprang up the steps. Even as he did so, he heard sudden shouts of alarm and anger coming from within the temple.

Then Nadia reappeared, looking rather startled and agitated.

"Goodness!" she gasped. "I almost ran right onto a lot of monks at their devotions!"

The camels were swinging past.

"We must get away from here in a hurry!" exclaimed Dick.

Even as he uttered the words several priests came hurrying to the open door of the temple. They saw Nadia. One of them pointed at her and shouted to his companions. Then the whole of them moved again, as if eager to lay hands on her.

"Here's trouble!" muttered Dick, feeling for his pistol.

"Don't let them touch me!" gasped Nadia.

The head priest called to some of the men of the train that was passing. Several of these men, swarthy and villainous in appearance, halted in answer to this call. The words of the priest seemed to arouse them. They glared at the girl and started to mount the steps.

Out flashed Merriwell's pistol.

"Hold on, you dogs!" he commanded, displaying the weapon. "Stop where you are! Back up, or I'll have to damage some of you!"

The sight of that pistol caused the foremost among them to retreat precipitately.

But Dick and Nadia were caught between two fires, as it were. The angry priests were behind them, while a number of savage men were in front.

The American boy knew he must lose not a moment in changing his position.

Grasping Nadia's wrist, he hurried down the steps and attempted to flee along the street.

Another shout from the priests caused several of the fierce-looking men to place themselves before Dick and the girl. Although Merriwell threatened to shoot, they would not let him pass.

Merriwell looked round for some place where he could hold off the fanatical Moslems. He was forced to retreat against the nearest wall.

Supporting Nadia with one arm, he lifted his pistol and fearlessly faced the howling crowd, which now began to close about them in a half circle, urged on by the priests.

"Death to the infidels!" howled the crowd.

They shook their fists at the boy and girl. Those behind tried to urge on those in advance. One old Turk spat at Dick.

Young Merriwell realized the seriousness of his position. He was pale, but his nerves remained steady and unshaken.

"Come on!" he cried clearly. "I'll fill some of you with lead!"

Suddenly the crowd parted. A man forced his way through, pushing other men to the right and left. As he advanced he drew a gleaming sword, the hilt of which was set with jewels.

The crowd seemed to think this man, who was an Arab of rank and distinction, judging by his dress, meant to attack the boy, and they uttered shouts of approval, urging him to run the "infidel dog" through.

Dick had turned his pistol on the man with the sword, but he hesitated.

"It is Ras al Had!" he exclaimed, in surprise.

CHAPTER XI—A MAN OF COMMAND

It was in truth the sheik who had been struck by the train the previous day.

The Arab turned and faced the howling mob, flourishing his shining sword.

"Destroy the infidel who has defiled the holy temple of the Prophet!" snarled one of the infuriated Mohammedans.

"By the grave of my father," cried the sheik, "I swear to slay the first who tries to touch her!"

They were astounded, and as he swept his sword with a hissing sound beneath their noses they involuntarily fell back.

One of the priests called to the sheik, demanding to know why he defended the infidels.

The aged Arab retorted that he had a most excellent reason, and that he would lay down his life rather than see either the girl or boy harmed.

He did more than that, for he called several of the mob by name, commanding them to move on and give the strangers permission to depart in peace.

One of the priests attempted to expostulate, explaining that the girl had entered the temple, thus committing an offense that could be atoned for by blood alone.

Then Ras al Had retorted that the girl had been alarmed by the camels of his train and had fled into the temple to escape from them. He further added that infidels were sometimes permitted to visit the temple, escorted by a military guard. In conclusion he stated that he was indebted for his very life to the boy who stood ready to defend the maiden, and, therefore, he was willing to surrender his life in behalf of the lad.

They realized that he was in earnest, and those whom he had called by name and ordered to depart began to slip away.

He then singled out three or four of his own camel drivers, who had dropped back to see what all the uproar was about, and called them to his side.

"Boy," he said, addressing Dick, "I will see that no harm comes to you or to

the girl. Trust me."

"Thank you," said Dick gratefully. "I think you took a hand just in time to prevent those wolves from tearing us to pieces."

"Without doubt you would have met serious injury at their hands. These men are my paid servants. We will escort you and protect you. Fear not."

The camel drivers gathered about Dick and Nadia. Ras al Had placed himself at their head and ordered them to march.

Flinging his hands in the air, one of the priests stood firmly in the path, refusing to move.

The eyes of Ras al Had shone strangely. He stepped close to the priest, called him by name, and spoke in a low tone.

"It was thy brother whom I delivered from slavery in Nubia," he said. "Then thou didst fall on my neck and weep and swear by the Prophet that whatever I should ask of thee at any time thou wouldst grant. Hast forgotten?"

"It is true, noble sheik," confessed the priest; "but tell me hast thou forgotten thy religion that thou canst defend an infidel who has defiled the temple of Mohammed?"

"Ras al Had never forgets. These infidels are mighty and powerful, and should harm come to them through thee, then thou wilt be forced to make reparation in the dust. For thy own good, stand aside and let them pass."

There seemed to be great command in the dark eyes of the swarthy man, and those eyes were fixed on the priest with burning insistence.

The priest hesitated a moment longer, and then, bowing low with dismay and regret he could not utter, he stood aside.

Ras al Had marched on, his servants following, still with Dick and Nadia in their midst.

They reached the camel train. Behind them the mob had melted away. The danger was past.

"Dick," said Nadia, pressing Merriwell's arm, "I think that old man is just splendid! I never dreamed a black man could be so fine!"

Ras al Had turned to them.

"Boy," he spoke, "it has been truly said that Ras al Had is one who never forgets a debt. Yet when I gave you my word to defend you with my sword and life should the time ever come that I found you in peril, I little thought to what it would bring me. Still I have canceled the debt, and I feel that I owe you nothing."

"You're all right, sheik!" exclaimed the boy enthusiastically. "I don't know how we are going to thank you for——"

Ras al Had checked him with a gesture.

"I want no thanks. Let me caution you against wandering about Damascus without escort or protection. It is a great folly. Where are your friends?"

Dick explained how it happened that he and Nadia had been caught in such a predicament.

The sheik gazed attentively at the girl and then shook his head soberly.

"A maid so beautiful is in great danger here, unless she be well protected. She might disappear suddenly, and years of searching might not disclose her fate. There are men in Damascus who could not look on her without coveting possession of her. How simple it would be for one of these buildings to swallow you both! You, boy, would meet a swift death, and your body would be so completely destroyed that no trace of it could ever be found. There are prisons in the city where dwell beautiful maidens like her, given every luxury save liberty. Once they have passed within the prison doors they may never again come forth."

Nadia shuddered and clung to Dick's arm.

"I have heard of such things," she said; "but I supposed the custom had been abolished."

"This day," said Ras al Had, "a friend of mine from the interior has arrived with many beautiful girls, the most of them Circassians. I spoke with him as I was entering the city. He will take them to a certain house, the location of which I know, and there they will be attended by hairdressers and dressmakers, who will do everything possible to add to their attractiveness. When they are prepared for inspection, certain rich men will visit them and choose from among them, paying the price demanded, after which no other man save their masters will ever look on their faces."

"Perfectly dreadful!" gasped Nadia. "It makes me shiver to think what would have happened had Hafsa Pasha been able to hoodwink me and my brother."

The sheik gave her a swift, keen look.

"Hafsa Pasha?" he said, a strange intonation in his voice. "How know you that man?"

"I met him on the steamer from Smyrna to Beirut."

"What happened?"

Nadia was confused.

"Why, he—he——"

"He made love to her," Dick explained. "He asked her to marry him."

"You knew him to be a Moslem?"

"I knew nothing at the time save what he told me of himself," answered the girl. "The captain of the vessel told me that he had been banished to Damascus by the sultan on account of some political intrigue, and that he had a harem."

Ras al Had bowed.

"It is true. I know that man—I know him well! He takes good care to avoid me. I was told by my friend, who had brought the girls from the interior, that there was among them one very beautiful maiden whom he hoped to sell to Hafsa Pasha

for a handsome price."

Nadia shivered again.

"To think that I could even talk with a monster who buys human beings like cattle!" she exclaimed.

"I have contemplated seeking the opportunity to meet Hafsa Pasha when he comes for the Circassian maiden," said the sheik. "It is possible that I may be there."

"It seems to me," observed Dick, "that you have no particularly friendly feeling toward Mr. Hafsa."

"I have no reason to feel kindly toward him," confessed the Arab, in a tone of much bitterness. "He once did my younger brother a great wrong. It has been truly said that Ras al Had never forgets, and this wrong he remembers. Some day Hafsa Pasha shall suffer for it, even as he caused my brother to suffer."

"I don't like to be inquisitive," said Dick; "but my curiosity is aroused, and I wonder how he wronged your brother."

"My brother sold him a cargo of fine rugs, silks, and many precious stones. Hafsa Pasha is no true Mohammedan. He has lived much in the Western countries. Otherwise he would not have denied the price he owed for the goods he had received. He was powerful in a way, and my brother disappeared. I demanded of Hafsa Pasha what had become of my brother, but he swore he knew not. More than a year later I found my brother, a slave and dying far beyond Bagdad, even near to Yezd, which is in the Great Salt Desert. With his last words my brother declared that he believed he was carried into slavery through the plotting and command of Hafsa Pasha, who sought thus to get him out of the way. Thus, you see, Hafsa Pasha escaped payment of the just debt he owed. There was no real proof, but I am satisfied that my brother was right. I have sought diligently to obtain the proof, that I might bring Hafsa Pasha to justice. Even though I have failed in my efforts, never once have I faltered in my resolve to bring punishment on the evildoer."

There was a sort of grim earnestness and intensity in the quiet words of the old sheik, and Dick felt that Hafsa Pasha had made a very bitter and dangerous enemy.

"Well, I hope you corner the old rascal in the end," said the boy. "But we must get back to the bazaars. Dunbar and the professor will be tearing the city up in search of us."

"I will send an escort with you," said Ras al Had. "Remember my words of warning and be cautious. We may never meet again, but I feel that I have canceled my debt to you, even as I shall some day make settlement with Hafsa Pasha."

Ras al Had called four sturdy black men and bade them escort the boy and girl back to the bazaars and from thence to their hotel, in case they wished it.

Then he bade Dick and Nadia a dignified farewell.

The escort were four villainous-looking black rascals, and Nadia was afraid of them; but Dick tried to reassure her, declaring that the servants of Ras al Had were to be trusted, no matter how untrustworthy they looked.

Here and there through the crooked, winding streets they made their way. To Dick it seemed that they had covered a far greater distance than was necessary in order to return directly to the bazaars; but he fancied the black men were taking them by a round-about course in order to avoid the vicinity of the temple where the trouble had taken place.

As they proceeded they were joined by a crooked, wizened old Turk, who seemed to know the black men. He spoke to them one by one, but not a word that he said reached the ears of the boy and girl.

Nadia shrank close to Dick, and the hand that clung to his arm trembled a little.

"I don't like that man," she whispered. "Did you see how he looked at me? I wish we were by ourselves. We do not need an escort."

Merriwell tried to reassure her, but he was not entirely easy in his mind.

Finally he spoke to one of the black men, asking why it took so long to reach the bazaars.

The fellow made some sort of an explanation in broken English, but scarcely a word of it could Dick understand.

By this time they were in a quarter of the city that added to the apprehension of the American boy. The people they passed stared at them in a manner that was decidedly disagreeable, to say the least, and many made remarks that were plainly of an insulting nature.

Finally Dick stopped.

"Look here," he said; "we will go it alone the rest of the way. We are much obliged for your kindness, but we don't need you any more."

Then the old Turk approached him and mildly but firmly insisted that it would be quite suicidal to dismiss the escort in such a manner and in such a quarter of the city.

"When did you get into this game?" demanded the boy, somewhat warmly. "It doesn't strike me that you have anything to say about it."

Then the crooked old fellow protested that he was a friend to Ras al Had and was working entirely in the interest of the sheik.

Dick's suspicions were redoubled, instead of allayed.

"That may be true," he said; "but we don't propose to trouble Ras al Had's friends any more. Take the whole bunch and go."

"And never again have the courage to look the great sheik in the face?" said the Turk. "No; not until I know you are safe with your friends will I abandon you."

Dick turned to one of the black men, who seemed to be something of a leader.

"Say, you," he exclaimed, "I want you to shake yourself and get out of this right away! Understand? Take this befezzed old relic with you, too. Git!"

The man shook his head and held up his hands as if he did not understand.

Nadia's alarm had increased. She saw that Dick was rapidly becoming very angry, and she urged him to hold his temper.

"I'll travel no farther with these men!" declared the determined boy.

The Turk said something to the black men, and they began to crowd about Dick and the girl.

Seeing this, the boy reached for his pistol.

Before he could draw the weapon, however, he was seized by the throat by a huge pair of hands, the owner of which was behind him. Another of the black rascals clutched his arm and prevented him from producing the weapon.

The hands which clasped the boy's neck were very powerful, and the massive fingers shut off his wind in a moment. The pressure thus exerted seemed crushing flesh and bone.

He exerted all his strength in the effort to break away, but realized that he had very little chance to succeed.

Through a haze he saw Nadia struggling weakly in the grip of the crooked Turk and one of the black men. There was a sudden roaring in his ears, but through it came a sharp sound that he knew was a scream from the lips of the unfortunate girl.

A feeling of desperate fury shot through his heart. The very fact that he felt himself impotent to aid Nadia thrilled him with a horrible madness. He remembered the warning words of Ras al Had.

But had the old sheik been sincere? Many a time he had heard that no Moslem ever felt himself bound in honor to an infidel. In fact, to deceive and betray an infidel was regarded as a commendable and praiseworthy proceeding.

Had not Ras al Had played a crafty game from the start? It was truly surprising that the sheik had dared array himself against the priests before the temple. Had he not done so in order to deceive and betray the infidels more completely? Was it not possible the old scoundrel had realized that any harm befalling the boy and girl in the vicinity of the bazaars might bring swift retribution on the offenders, for which reason he had entered into the affair, held the mob in check for the time being, finally to decoy the victims into a part of the city where they could be murdered with very little chance that the crime would ever be punished?

This hazy thought caused young Merriwell to twist and squirm in the clutch of those iron hands, making a last deranged effort to free himself that he might fight for her.

His senses reeled and a black cloud, riven by flashes of lightning, descended upon him. He knew he was losing consciousness. Heavy bells rang in his ears. Somewhere in the distance cannon boomed. Then these sounds died away. The harsh bells and booming cannon were silenced by an organ peal. The music thrilled through him. It sank to a soft, throbbing strain and then receded into the distance, growing fainter and fainter. Peace fell on him. He struggled no more.

Was it death?

CHAPTER XII—BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

Dick's next sensation was that of an acute pain that shot through every limb and every part of his body. On his chest there seemed a terrible weight that was smothering him, while his head was being crushed by an iron band. He was choking; his neck gave him the most exquisite agony. Far away he seemed to hear the babble of mocking voices. Some one was laughing at him; there were many of them.

In spite of the terrible pains he felt, every limb seemed numb and helpless. He had not strength nor power of will. A husky groan came from his lips, which were purple and tinged with blood. That sound called forth another burst of mocking laughter.

He opened his eyes. At first he could see nothing, for the bright sun of the Orient was shining full upon him.

He knew not what had happened.

After a bit he began to realize that he was lying flat on his back in a narrow street, while around him at a little distance were standing many strange men. They were gazing at him in contempt and laughing at his misery. To him in his agony their faces seemed the faces of fiends.

A feeling of resentment and anger lay hold upon him. It infuriated him because they could stand about and mock him in his wretchedness.

"You dog!" he tried to cry; but the hissing gasp that came from his lips was inarticulate.

One of the crowd stepped out and poked the boy with his foot. Then he lifted his hand to his mouth and threw back his head, as if drinking, after which he made a few staggering steps.

The crowd roared with laughter.

For all of his condition, Dick understood that pantomime. The crowd thought him drunk.

But what had happened to him? Why was he lying there in that wretched street, with the fierce sun beating on him?

He closed his eyes and tried to remember what had taken place. His effort carried him back to Fardale. For the time being he fancied he had been engaged in a desperate game of football, and in the fearful line-bucking clash he had been injured. That was it. He was lying on the football field. The narrow street, the queer, gray houses, and the mocking fiends who laughed at his misery were the hallucinations of his shocked brain.

What were the boys doing? Had they checked the charge of the enemy? Perhaps they had the ball! Possibly some one of them had carried it over the enemy's line for a touchdown, and so, in the excitement of victory, their injured captain had been forgotten.

"Rah! rah! rah! Fardale!"

He tried to cheer. It was the duty of a true son of old Fardale to cheer as long as the breath of life remained in his body.

Once more that sound of mocking laughter reached him. Again he opened his eyes.

He saw no comrades in red and black. He saw no stand packed with cheering cadets. Again he beheld the gray buildings of the dirty street. Again he saw those leering faces and grinning mouths all around him.

"It's a nightmare!" he whispered. "I must break the spell! I must move!"

He made a mighty effort, and, in spite of the pain, rolled over on his side.

The old man came up and kicked him back into his former position.

"Wait!" thought the boy—"wait till I get up, you dirty wretch! You'll not wipe your feet on me after that!"

One of the crowd spat at him and called him a filthy infidel.

"I'll try to remember you, also!" said Dick to himself.

Weakly he lifted his hands to his neck. It was paining him frightfully, and he seemed to feel marks upon it, as if something had left indelible prints in the flesh.

"I'm not in Fardale," he thought. "I'm somewhere—somewhere—somewhere far away. Where am I? and how did I get here?"

The pressure on his head prevented him from thinking. He felt to see if an iron band were truly crushing his skull.

He could find nothing of the sort.

"I must get up! I must! I will!"

They laughed and called to him as he lifted himself little by little to his elbow. At last, with his hands on the ground and his body lurched to one side, like a man wounded unto death, he paused, breathing with a horrible, whistling sound.

"Strength—I must have strength!" he thought. "If I give up the least bit, I'll drop back here and never rise again."

So he waited until a little more strength came to him. He seemed to summon it by his indomitable and unyielding will.

He heard the rabble chattering about him, but he no longer heeded them.

"The ocean liner—England—Italy—Constantinople!" He was beginning to remember.

"Where is Brad? Where is the professor?"

He straightened up, in spite of all the pain it cost him. He shifted until he was on his hands and knees.

The old man, grinning maliciously, again hastened forward and lifted his foot, intending to kick the boy over.

"Stay!"

It was a single word of command, but it was spoken in a tone that caused the man to pause.

Through the crowd strode a man with a dark face and a black beard that was threaded with gray. He was dressed in garments that seemed to proclaim him a person of more than common rank. He advanced and bent over the lad, whom he lifted to a standing position, supporting him with one arm.

"Boy," he demanded, "what does it mean? Tell me what has happened to thee and to the beautiful maiden."

"The—the beautiful maiden?" muttered Dick. "You mean—you mean—Nadia?"

Then he remembered, and the shock caused him to straighten up stiffly. He turned and looked into the face of Ras al Had.

"You—you treacherous snake!" he panted.

With all the strength he could summon, he struck the old sheik in the face.

The mob gasped, and then it howled. It pressed forward, seeking to lay hands on the tottering boy who had dared strike one of the true faith.

Again Ras al Had drew his sword. Some of them expected to see him run the infidel through the body. Instead of that, he drove them back.

"Keep thy hands off him!" commanded the sheik. "Leave him to me!"

Once more he clutched the lad, who was swaying and apparently ready to fall.

"Don't touch me, you traitor!" gasped Merriwell. "I wish I had left you to die

beside the railroad, instead of pumping the breath of life back into your miserable, old carcass!"

"You are mad, boy."

"That's right, I am!"

"Tell me what happened?"

"You know!"

"By the beard of the Prophet, I swear I do not know."

"It is no sin to lie to an infidel!"

"Ras al Had never lied to any man."

"You do not know what happened? Well, we were betrayed by those black dogs you sent to escort us. We were led here. I was choked into unconsciousness. What has become of Nadia I cannot tell."

A strange and terrible look came to the face of the old Arab. His eyes glittered with a deadly light.

"Do you swear that my men did this?"

"Yes."

"Then to you I swear that each and every one of them shall pay the penalty of their treachery with his life! That is the oath of Ras al Had! Do you hear me!"

"I hear, but——"

"You shall see that I keep it. Trust me again. With a word I might have set these men upon you to beat the life from your weak body. Why did I not speak that word?"

"I don't know," confessed Dick, "unless it was in order that you might have the satisfaction of deceiving me and betraying me again."

"If I leave you now, they will fall on you. I will remain by you and take you to a place of safety. I will prove to you that I am honest. More than that, I will find the maiden and restore her to you."

"Can—can you do it?"

"I have given my pledge. Lean on my arm. No one will place the weight of a finger on you while you are with me."

They walked away, the old sheik supporting the boy and questioning him. Dick related everything that had taken place. As well as possible he described the appearance of the old Turk who had joined the escort sent by Ras al Had to conduct the boy and girl back to their friends.

"I think I know the man," nodded the sheik. "I am sure I know him."

"But your servants—you can force the truth from them."

"I doubt if I behold any one of them for many days to come. Without doubt they were well paid for what they did, and they will endeavor to keep beyond my reach, for they know the meaning of my wrath. Yet they shall not escape me in the end."

"But it is the girl—it is poor Nadia I am thinking of!" groaned Dick. "She may be dragged into a harem."

"Has she friends of influence in your country?"

"Yes. She——"

"You must appeal to the American consul. In the meantime I will be at work. Hast forgotten that she fell beneath the covetous eye of Hafsa Pasha?"

"No! I believe that wretch is behind this dirty piece of work! If so, I'll have his life!"

"It is not likely she will be taken into a harem until the man who caused her capture learns what is going to be done about it. She will be kept somewhere for the time being. If you have influence enough to create a great disturbance about it, some day she will be set free in some remote part of the city. It will be claimed that she was captured and held for ransom by brigands. You know such a thing has happened to some of your American missionaries. If her disappearance causes no great disturbance, then the man into whose power she has fallen may add her to his harem. For a few days, however, I believe she is safe. For her captors will not dare injure her."

To a slight degree these words relieved Dick. Of course he was still greatly distressed over what had happened to Nadia; but if she was not immediately dragged into a harem, there might be plenty of opportunity to frustrate any designs upon her.

Dick's brain was growing clearer and his body stronger. He no longer believed that Ras al Had was concerned in bringing about the misfortune that had befallen Nadia.

"Forgive me, sheik, for striking you as I did," he entreated. "I ask your pardon in all humbleness. I was infuriated with the conviction that you had betrayed us."

"Say no more of that. I should have accompanied you, for then no harm would have befallen you. I feel that I am responsible; and, feeling thus, I shall leave no stone unturned to aid you. This way, we will find a conveyance at the corner. When you have reached your friends, lose no time in laying the case before your consul. He will know the best course to pursue; but meanwhile Ras al Had will be working faithfully for you."

CHAPTER XIII—INWARD TORTURE

Alone, Brad Buckhart returned to the hotel. He realized that he had acted in a ridiculous manner in avoiding his friends and running away from Dick and Nadia on the streets, but his feeling of shame for such folly was smothered by one of resentment and jealousy.

"I thought her different from other girls," he muttered, as he paced the floor of his room; "but she's just like them all—false, fickle, and giddy. She pretended to like me, but out of sight is out of mind with her. She flirted with that confounded Turk—yes, she did! That's what got her into trouble. Her brother is just as foolish as she is. He encouraged her. I suppose they think me nothing but a rough Texan, good enough to fight for them and get them out of their troubles, but not good for anything else. Well, if I take a fancy, I can show them I'm not half as rough as they think.

"I imagine I can make a respectable appearance in refined society if I choose to try. Perhaps my family is just as good as the Budthornes. I'd rather confess to hailing from Texas than to admit that I was from Chicago. Chicago! Why, a decent white man will turn to a smoked ham in that town in less than three days! As for wild and woolly places, I declare Chicago lays way over Texas. A man is liable to be held up anywhere in Chicago in broad daylight. If he's sandbagged and robbed, and makes a complaint to the police, he stands a fine prospect of being locked up as a vagrant. No one from Chicago can get chesty with me."

He was perfectly serious, little realizing the humor of his observations and attitude. Although naturally broad-minded and manly, he had been "rubbed the wrong way of the fur" by Nadia's action, and, for the time, at least, he was almost childish in his resentment.

The fact that he had this weakness, however, made his other manly qualities stand out even more clearly.

"I'll show her how much I care!" he continued. "I'll just hold my head up and keep out of her way. Let her go it! Let her flirt with Turks! If she does, she'll be sorry!"

He paused. The picture of Nadia making eyes at a handsome Turkish gentleman rose before him. He fancied he was willing she should do anything she wished, but now, all at once, he realized that she could hurt him very much in case she disdained him and turned her attention in other directions.

He had been bluffing when he ran away from her, and he knew it now. As a rule he was able and willing to back up any bluff he made, but now his reason told him he would weaken immediately in case this bluff was called.

What if Nadia became offended by his ungentlemanly behavior in running away from her when she called to him and tried to overtake him? What if that one bad break of his should cause her in future to regard him with indifference or aversion?

"Oh, ginger!" he exclaimed. "I couldn't stand that! It would drive me to suicide! I'm a chump, and I can't help it! Dick is with her. Perhaps she'll get smitten on him!"

This thought added to his agitation.

"How can she help it?" he muttered, again fiercely pacing the floor. "Dick is the sort of fellow all the girls care for. He's far superior to me, and I don't see how she came to be interested the least bit in me in the first place. Of course, there is June Arlington and Doris Templeton—but they're on the other side of the Atlantic, and I don't believe there ever yet was a pretty girl who did not believe she could cut out another girl if she really tried.

"Perhaps that's what Nadia is trying to do! Perhaps she's playing a clever game by pretending to have any interest in me and seeming indifferent to Dick. A girl best attracts a fellow by seeming indifferent to him. The girl who pursues a chap is bound to lose him, nine times out of ten. It's the fellow who wants to do the pursuing. He loves the chase and the zest of it. Some girls know this, and they play the timid deer to perfection. Nadia Budthorne is right clever, and I'll wager something this little game is no secret to her.

"I've hit it at last! I've known all along that she really cared for Dick, and now I've been fool enough to help her in her play. Say, I ought to be shot! I know Dick is on the level, but how is he going to resist a clever girl like her? He might, if June Arlington were near; but June is far away, and, in my estimation, Nadia lays away over June any old time. Oh, you poor fool!"

He clenched his fist and struck himself on the side of the head.

Thus it happened that Professor Gunn and Dunbar Budthorne found the Texan in anything but a happy frame of mind when they returned to the hotel.

They were agitated over the disappearance of Dick and Nadia, for whom they had searched and inquired ere leaving the bazaars. When they did return to the hotel it was with the expectation and hope that they might find the boy and girl there.

"They will turn up all right," declared Brad. "Dick will take care of her, never fear."

And now for the first time in his life he grew violently jealous of his bosom comrade.

"If he plays me double I'll never again have the least confidence in human nature!" he mentally cried.

But when an hour passed and the missing boy and girl failed to return to the hotel Buckhart began to share the alarm of the professor and Budthorne.

"If anything happens to that boy I'll never forgive myself!" said the old pedagogue.

"We must look for them," said Dunbar. "You know what took place at the

railway station. What if some of Hafsa Pasha's tools found Dick and Nadia alone and unprotected?"

Suddenly Brad Buckhart reassumed his Western manners.

"Whoop!" he cried. "Let's amble forth on the warpath! Let's take to the trail and go out for scalps! I'm ready, and you know I can scrap some, if I don't shine resplendent at a soirée. I'm in right good humor for a scrimmage."

Together they left the hotel and started to return to the bazaar; but they had not proceeded far when they were stopped by the appearance of an open carriage, in which were Dick and Ras al Had.

Dick called to them, and the carriage stopped. Young Merriwell sprang down.

Budthorne, pale and shaking with apprehension, rushed forward and clutched him, demanding to know what had become of Nadia.

Dick told the whole story in as few words as possible.

As he listened Brad Buckhart grew ashen. He realized that Dick and Nadia had become separated from the professor and Budthorne through their efforts to follow and overtake him. By running away in such a childish manner he had led them into all that trouble, the end of which had been the disappearance of the girl.

"Fool! fool!" he groaned. "I am to blame for it all!"

CHAPTER XIV—DICK DISOBEYS

Late that day, as the grateful shadows of approaching night were settling over Damascus, Ras al Had came quietly to the hotel, and was highly satisfied to find Dick Merriwell there. He drew the boy aside, saying he wished to speak with him in private.

"I have found one of the dogs who betrayed me," said the old sheik. "Would you behold him? Would you hear what he has to say?"

"Yes, yes."

"Do you trust me now?"

"Of course I do!"

"Do you trust me completely?"

"Yes."

"Then tell your friends not to worry about you, even though you leave them and do not return with the passing of another day. If you ask questions now I shall know you do not trust me, even though you say so."

Dick asked no questions.

Thus far everything possible had been done for Nadia. Her disappearance had been reported, and they had received the assurance that an earnest effort would be made to find her and return her in safety to her friends. Dick had made a formal complaint of the assault, and was informed that the whole matter should be investigated and the guilty parties punished.

They all knew, however, that they were not liable to receive anything more than promises from the Turkish authorities. This being the case, they were compelled to rely mainly on the American consul and the promise of Ras al Had, the sheik.

It is probable that Dick Merriwell was the only one who really placed any confidence in the old Arab.

Brad Buckhart was immovable in his conviction that the sheik was concerned in the dastardly work.

Knowing Brad would raise a disturbance, Dick told the professor that he might be gone for twenty-four hours. Immediately Zenas made an effort to exercise his authority over the boy.

"You shall not go, Richard!" he exclaimed. "I forbid it!"

"I am sorry you forbid it, professor, for you know I dislike to disobey you."

"Eh? Hum! haw! Why, why, you don't mean to tell me to my face that you will defy me?"

"No, sir; I do not defy you. Circumstances make it necessary for me to disobey you, and so——"

"You shall not do it! I won't have it! Your brother looks to me to bring you back safely to him, and I——"

"Were my brother here he would approve of what I am doing."

"Well, what are you doing? Where are you going?"

"I can't tell you."

"Haw! hum! I positively decline to let you leave this hotel!"

"I can't help that. Look after Budthorne. He's nearly distracted. Tell him to brace up. Somehow I have confidence that we'll be able to find Nadia. You'll have your hands full taking care of Brad."

"I need you to help me. The boy is crazy."

"He blames himself for what happened, and he always will blame himself unless Nadia is found."

"I can't do anything with him. He's like a mad bull. Richard, you are the only one who can handle him. Don't leave me!"

"I must."

"Why, I thought you an obedient boy! I never fancied you would set yourself up in defiance of me."

"You do not understand, professor; I am doing what I firmly believe is for the best."

Zenas wrung his hands.

"If we ever get out of this mess," he declared, "I'm going to take you back home just as fast as possible."

"All right; but that is something to be considered later."

"You should be there. You should be in school at Fardale this day."

"You forget that I was expelled, professor."

"By that old dunkhead, Gooch! Wait till we get home. I'm going to have a little session with Barnaby Gooch, and also with Chester Arlington. Your turn is coming, Richard—that is if you do not throw your life away in some reckless folly. Do be cautious, Richard! Listen to me!"

Dick did his best to reassure the old man, but Zenas clutched his arm and attempted to cling to him, still urging and entreating.

Swiftly the boy released the fingers of the old pedagogue.

"I'll come back all right in time," he said, and then hastened away.

Gunn hurried after him out of the hotel. He saw Dick spring upon the back of a horse. Another horse, with a dark, silent man on its back, stood near. Both animals were off in a moment, disappearing with their riders into the dusky shadows of a street leading to the north.

Zenas Gunn stood trembling in front of the hotel. His heart was heavy with dread.

"Oh, Richard!" he murmured pathetically; "Heaven guard you! You are brave unto recklessness, and I fear that some day your recklessness will bring ruin upon you."

At the side of Ras al Had Dick Merriwell rode through Damascus. They were on the outskirts of the city when the aged sheik drew rein.

"We stop here," he said.

Immediately two men appeared to take the horses.

They dismounted.

"Follow, boy," commanded the sheik.

Dick did not hesitate about obeying. He kept at the heels of the Arab, who entered some straw-thatched sheds. It was very dark under the shed, not even the light of the stars penetrating there.

Ras al Had uttered a call, and soon a man came hurrying with a fluttering

light. He was black as midnight, with thick lips, and huge gold rings in his ears. He salaamed before the sheik.

"Hold the light, Assouan," directed Ras al Had. "Let us behold the dog who betrayed me."

Then he touched the arm of the American boy and made a gesture toward the ground not far from their feet.

Assouan held the light as commanded, and it fell on a spectacle that caused Dick to recoil and utter a cry of horror.

Face downward on the ground, his arms and legs outspread, with his wrists and ankles bound to stout stakes, was a black man, stripped of clothing. His back was covered with blood.

"You see what happens to curs who betray Ras al Had," said the sheik, in a harsh voice.

"Heavens!" gasped Dick. "The miserable wretch has been beaten until his back is all cut up!"

"He was lashed until the pain loosened his tongue and he confessed," said the sheik. "This man was one of the four I sent to escort you and the maiden."

"You—you compelled him to tell what has become of her?"

"I wrung it from his lips."

"What did he tell?"

"You shall hear."

Ras al Had touched the wretched victim with a staff which he took from one corner of the shed.

The man did not stir.

"Look, thou dog!" said the sheik; "art longing for further punishment? Then speak promptly, or I swear by the beard of the Prophet that thou shalt be cut into a thousand pieces! Who paid thee to choke the infidel lad?"

"Why, it's the fellow who nearly murdered me!" exclaimed Dick, for he had not recognized the mutilated wretch.

"The same," said the sheik. "Why doesn't he speak? Assouan, bring the whip."

The black man with the light hastened to obey. The whip, a long, wicked-looking affair, with a rawhide lash into which were knotted many pieces of lead, was quickly produced.

Ras al Had took the spluttering light from Assouan's hand.

"Stand ready," he directed. "When I bid you strike have no mercy."

Dick's blood was cold in his body. The situation was one to fill him with horror. He was alone in that wretched shed, his companions a merciless Arab, a black man of the desert, and the helpless wretch bound outspread on the bare ground. It was night, and the moon had not yet risen. Beneath the shed the dark-

ness was dispelled only by the flaring light, which cast many grotesque shadows dancing on the walls.

Again Ras al Had bade the man speak. In return there was neither sound nor movement.

"Strike, Assouan—strike!" said the sheik coldly.

Assouan lifted the whip.

Dick could stand no more of it, and he stepped in front of the black man, crying:

"Hold! This is too much! Tell me, Ras al Had, what he confessed, but do not carry this thing further!"

A strange look of mingled surprise and rage at this interference settled on the face of the old Arab. He opened his lips to speak, but at this moment the man on the ground groaned and mumbled a few broken words.

Instantly Ras al Had bent over the wretch, holding the light so it fell on the man's face. The traitor's head had dropped over to one side, his lips were open, showing his gleaming teeth, while his eyes glittered glassily.

The sheik poked a finger at those wide-open, glittering eyes. They did not blink. Then Ras al Had rose and said very quietly:

"It is too late. He will speak no more. He is dead."

Dick felt ill, and hurried out of the shed into the open air.

The old sheik followed.

"Although he is dead," he said, "I can tell you what he confessed. The name of the crooked old Turk who paid them to attack you and carry the maiden away is Abu Hammed. Hammed is in the employ of Hafsa Pasha. The girl is to be kept somewhere until the excitement dies down, and then she will be added to Hafsa Pasha's harem. He thinks that by that time he can win her over so she will be willing and glad to live a life of ease in the harem."

"If you had only learned where they took her——"

"Wait. I told you of my friend who just arrived in Damascus with many beautiful girls, one of which he has brought for Hafsa Pasha."

"Yes."

"Hafsa Pasha will visit the house where those girls are to-night. I have not forgotten the fate of my brother far away in Persia. Some day my sword shall drink the blood of Hafsa Pasha; but first I would find a way to compel him to tell where the maid you seek is hidden."

"Wait!" cried Dick, struck by a sudden idea. "It might be done! I believe it can be! It's worth trying!"

"Of what do you speak?"

"I have a plan."

"Unfold it."

"Can't you get me into the house where those girls are?"

"Of what good would that be?"

"I'll go disguised as a girl."

"A girl?"

"Yes."

"But——"

"It will not be the first time I have made up as a girl, and they say I make a pretty girl, too. If you know where I can get the outfit, I'll make up as a girl and go there. Can't you arrange it so I'll fall beneath the notice of Hafsa Pasha? If his attention is called to me I'll do my part."

"What will you do?"

"I'll fool him. I'll get him to buy me and take me to his harem. I'll win his confidence and find out where Nadia is hidden."

"It is a desperate venture."

"But I'll play my part, depend on it. Wait until you see me made up as a girl. If you are not satisfied then you may refuse to go on with the scheme."

The old Arab seemed to catch some of the boy's enthusiasm.

"Very well," he said. "If it costs you your life, I cannot feel that I am to bear the blame. It is your plan. I'll take you without delay to a place where you may dress and prepare for the deception. But you shall have assistants, hairdressers, dressmakers, anything you need to make your disguise perfect."

Ras al Had then spoke to Assouan, giving him some directions in regard to the dead man in the shed.

Dick followed his strange companion through a number of crooked streets. Finally they reached the door of a house, to which they were admitted on knocking.

The sheik conferred with a gnarled and crooked old Jew, explaining that he wished the boy to be dressed and made up like a girl. The old Jew seemed puzzled and surprised, but agreed, for a price, to attempt the transformation.

Time was passing, and the sheik did not haggle. He simply insisted that the job should be thoroughly done, and the boy should be made up as carefully and tastily as if he were in truth a girl.

Then he left Dick in the old Jew's hands, saying he would hasten to complete the necessary arrangements and then return for the transformed boy.

Less than an hour later the aged sheik again knocked at the Jew's door and was admitted. He was informed that the boy would soon be ready to accompany him, but that he would have to wait a few minutes while the finishing touches of the disguise were being put on.

The Jew asked him if he had any objections to waiting in a room with a young lady customer, and Ras al Had soon found himself in a small apartment, in

a corner of which sat a girl in street costume. Apparently she was a foreigner, for her flesh was dazzlingly fair, and her clothes, from the beautiful hat on her head to the high-heeled boots on her feet, had a distinct Parisian touch.

The sheik remained standing, quite aware that the girl was surveying him with evident interest or curiosity. His one glance had shown him that she was unusually handsome, with dark hair and eyes.

Finally she heaved a sigh and moved impatiently.

"Dear me!" she said, in perfect English. "This is very tiresome. I've waited nearly an hour. Won't you sit down, sir?"

Ras al Had bowed very low and took a seat upon the floor.

"How funny!" laughed the girl, with a fetching little shrug of her shoulders. "All you dark gentlemen decline to sit on chairs. You always sit on the floor or the ground, and cross your legs."

Again he bowed, without speaking.

"Don't you understand English?"

"Very well, madam."

"I'm no madam; I'm a miss. I'm looking for a husband. I don't suppose you know where I can find a man with plenty of rocks? I'm out for the coin."

The Arab glanced at her keenly, wondering if she could be in earnest.

She fluttered her fan and smiled over the top of it with a bewitching look.

"You're not much of a talker, are you?" she went on. "Well, never mind. American girls can speak for themselves, and the men, too."

"Are you from America, miss?"

"Sure thing. I'm from Cleveland, Ohio. Really, I started out to travel round the world, writing newspaper letters for the home papers; but all the papers have cut me off, and I'm stranded. I don't care about going back home, for I made up my mind to catch a rich husband on the trip. Now, if you could put me next with some old gazabo who has lots of the needful, and I succeeded in raking him in, I'd willingly make it worth your while."

Ras al Had drew a deep breath of wonderment. Although he did not fully understand her, he comprehended that this was one of the free-and-easy young ladies of the Western world of whom he had heard. She was young and bewitching in appearance, but her manner of talk seemed to betray a knowledge of the world one would not suspect her to possess.

The sheik shook his head.

"I can give you no assistance," he declared.

She laughed and sprang up, crossing the floor toward him.

He rose hastily.

"I don't believe you know me," said the girl. "We have met before, and I am sure, as a special favor, you will aid me in capturing a rich husband."

He retreated before her, but she followed him up, and actually pinned him in a corner.

"Come, now!" she cried, with a dazzling smile that showed her perfect teeth; "you can't get out of it. I'm not particular, and I'll marry almost anybody with the dust. I'd even marry Hafsa Pasha, and you can fix that up for me."

He protested that it was impossible, and his manner caused the girl to laugh still more heartily.

"How do I look?" she asked. "Is this get-up all right?"

"Indeed, you should have no trouble in getting a rich husband," said the sheik.

"Then take me to the house of your friend, where I am to meet Hafsa Pasha."

"You—you——"

"I am the boy you brought here to be changed into a girl."

"Allah have mercy! Impossible!"

The "girl" was in truth Dick Merriwell, and he laughed heartily over the amazement of the old Arab. Even then Ras al Had seemed to doubt his senses; but the Jew came in, grinning and rubbing his hands together, and stood waiting for his price.

"Wonderful!" murmured the sheik. "Why, you play the part so well that any man might be deceived. It is worth the money, Abraham. Now I believe you will succeed, boy, in your daring scheme. But I shall try to be near you, for you may suddenly need the aid of my arm and my sword."

CHAPTER XV—PURCHASING A HUMAN BEING

In a large room of many mirrors with frescoed ceilings of bright colors, the floors covered with Turkish rugs, and the place lavishly furnished in Oriental style, were gathered seventeen girls of various races and still more varying beauty. The cheeks of some were dusky, while others were wonderfully fair. All were attired in such fine clothes as seemed best to enhance their good looks. They were taking their ease on divans and couches, some of them smoking cigarettes, some conversing, some remaining proudly apart from the others.

These were the girls brought to Damascus by the trader, and all were for sale, like so many cattle.

To this house came various wealthy men, who inspected the girls critically, surveying them and taking note of their charms, much after the manner of men who purchase horses in open market. The old trader was on hand to dilate on the attractions of each girl and to listen to such offers as the gentlemen chose to make.

In Damascus, as in many other parts of the Orient, this was regarded as a legitimate business. To the would-be purchasers and the old trader there was nothing of a shameful nature in connection with it. The girls thus sold would be taken to the various homes of their purchasers, there to become legitimate wives, after the custom of the country.

One girl, dressed in unusual taste, sat apart from the others, seeming too proud to attempt to enter into conversation with them. She was very pretty, and many were the envious glances cast toward her by the others.

She had lately been added to their number, and already they were gossiping that she was an English girl who found herself penniless in the country, and was willing to become the wife of some rich man.

The old trader seemed to know he had secured a prize in this girl, for the price he demanded for her was so high that several visitors who had been attracted by her and were willing to pay unusually well to secure her, were compelled to content themselves with others, although they all relinquished the hope of purchasing her with expressions of regret.

Finally a man of dignified bearing and polished appearance came sauntering into the room and paused, glancing around in a careless manner.

The moment the old trader saw this man he hastened to him, rubbing his hands and bowing very low.

"Welcome, most noble Pasha!" he exclaimed. "I am sure I shall this night have the pleasure of beholding thy pleasure. Never before has any man brought to Damascus such a collection of feminine loveliness. Verily they are pearls beyond price."

"So I have heard, Bilmah," was the answer. "Already I have met two who have looked on your pearls, and they informed me that you had here one that was almost priceless in your estimation. My curiosity has been greatly aroused. I would look on this English maiden."

"Oh, there are others equally beautiful," the trader hastened to declare—"many others. Look, yonder is a fair Circassian. I bought her from her father, and paid him——"

"Never mind her. I am not looking for a Circassian. They weary me. I have traveled in the West, and the women of those lands interest me. I would see the

English maiden."

"But first thou shouldst see——"

"Not another one, old man! Show me the one I wish to see."

"But, great Pasha, it was understood between us that I should bring thither for thee the fairest Circassian I could discover——"

The visitor cut the old man short.

"You are wasting my time, old man. Unless you show me at once the English maiden I will depart."

The trader made a gesture of resignation.

"Come!" he said.

The visitor followed him until they paused before the divan on which sat the girl who had attracted so much attention and admiration.

"Behold her!" said Bilmah.

The girl glanced up shyly over her outspread fan, giving the Turk a sidelong glance from her fine, black eyes, in the depths of which there was a strange light that fascinated him.

Hafsa Pasha bowed very low, his hand on his heart.

"So this is the one whose charms I heard extolled ere I crossed the threshold of this house?" he said. "You are English, they tell me. It is most astonishing to find an English girl here."

"I suppose it is," she answered, in a very low voice that was full of strange music and gave him a decided thrill.

He sat on the floor at her feet, rolling a cigarette.

"Tell me how it happens that you are here," he urged.

"I cannot," she answered, in apparent great confusion. "It is a tale of misfortune. Speak of something else."

"Are you aware what you are doing?"

"Fully."

"Do you know that once you have entered the harem of any man who may purchase you there can be no backing out—no escape?"

"I have thought of it all."

"And you will not be the only wife of the husband who secures you."

"I know."

"Still, I cannot understand you. It is utterly unlike one of your blood to do such a thing. There must be a reason for it."

"Of course there is. Perhaps I have a brother or a friend who is in deep distress and needs money at once. Perhaps I have arranged with the trader that a certain portion of the price paid for me shall be sent at once to this person. Does that not offer an explanation?"

Hafsa Pasha lighted his cigarette and eyed her attentively.

"I have been told that the price Bilmah demands is exorbitant. Still, under certain circumstances you might be worth it to me."

"What are the circumstances?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"If I purchase you you will be mine to do as I command."

"Of course."

"Possibly I have somewhere another English-speaking maiden who rebels against my authority and refuses to bow unto me."

"Another?" laughed the girl behind her fan. "You must be fond of the English."

"Were I to purchase you, I should expect you to become without delay the companion of this other girl. I should expect you to exert your influence upon her to lead her to submit to her lot."

"I see nothing very hard in that."

"But she might tell you a woeful tale of an imaginary wrong. She might seek to arouse your sympathy. She might claim that she had been captured and imprisoned against her will."

"I am growing interested. If you can afford to pay the price demanded for me, you must be a very rich man."

"I am far from poor."

"You are kind to your wives?"

"I am gentleness itself."

"They have every comfort and luxury in the home you provide for them?"

"No woman can ask for more."

"Then this girl should soon learn to be contented and happy. She has some peculiar ideas in her head just now, but she will get over them. If you purchase me, I shall do everything in my power for her."

"You Western women are remarkable. No woman of the East would talk to me like this. I almost fear you. I seem to feel that you possess a strange power that our women know nothing of."

Again she laughed.

"You'll get used to me in time," she said. "That is, you will if you are not bluffing."

"Bluffing? Perhaps I know what you mean, and still——"

"I mean about paying the price Bilmah demands. I have seen men who pretended they were ready and willing to spend money when they had no thought of doing so."

"You shall see what I mean to do. Of course I have a right to make the best bargain possible with old Bilmah."

"No; you must pay the price he demands. Whatever you induce him to take

off you keep from the one to whom he is to send the money."

"Do you trust him to forward it?"

"That is fixed. The one who got me in here will see that Bilmah does not cheat."

"Very well. Although as yet I have seen scarcely more of your face than your eyes and forehead, yet I am going to pay the price. Be ready to leave this place directly. I shall have a carriage at the door in less than ten minutes."

Then Hafsa Pasha arose and sought the old trader.

CHAPTER XVI—THE SWORD IS STAINED

Nadia Budthorne had wept until the fount of tears seemed dry. She had beaten with her hands against the heavy door of her prison room until her knuckles streamed blood. She had shouted and screamed until she sank exhausted to the floor.

How much time had passed she knew not. When a tray of food was slipped into the room she had no knowledge of the occurrence. She first saw it on the floor near the door, but not a morsel did she touch.

She lay prone and helpless and despairing when a rustling sound startled and aroused her. She rose swiftly on one hand, and then a cry of astonishment escaped her pale lips, for before her stood a beautiful girl. Behind the stranger the door was silently closing.

"Who—who—are—you?" asked Nadia hoarsely.

"Your friend," was the answer, in a softly sympathetic voice.

"Friend? You are a stranger."

"Still I am your friend. Let me help you."

"Your voice!" muttered Nadia. "It seems familiar, somehow, and yet—I've never seen you before."

The strange girl assisted Nadia to rise, and led her to a couch. She was much larger than Nadia, and seemed somewhat older.

"My poor child!" she murmured. "How you have suffered!"

"Oh, how I have suffered!" moaned Nadia. "But why are you here? I do not

understand it. You—you are English or American. You cannot be——"

"Hush! Do not speak so loud."

"No one can hear us. I have screamed until I lost my voice. These terrible walls smother all sounds."

The strange girl was looking around searchingly. Leaving Nadia, she made a quick circuit of the room, searching the walls with her eyes. She paused to try the door and then returned to the couch.

"Listen," she whispered, lifting her finger warningly. "Keep your nerve now. Do not utter a cry. I am here to save you."

Nadia showed her incredulity.

"To save me?" she whispered back. "How can that be? Who are you?"

"One of your best friends."

"I will not believe it! It is another trick!"

"It is no trick, as far as you are concerned. It may be a trick on Hafsa Pasha."

"Then he——"

"You are his captive."

"I knew it! The monster! If my brother—if Brad and Dick find this out he shall suffer!"

"If you promise to do just as I direct I will save you from that man."

"How can you? You are only a woman."

"That's what I appear to be."

"You cannot be more than nineteen."

"Younger than that," was the reply. "Still I will save you."

"It's impossible! They brought you here to deceive me!"

"That's correct. Old Hafsa did it himself, but he is the one deceived. Tonight he paid a handsome price for me, with the idea of adding me to his harem. Oh, I must laugh! I must! Where's my handkerchief! Let me smother the sound!"

The strange girl stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth and laughed until her face was fairly purple. Her whole body shook with merriment.

Nadia's bewilderment increased.

"I don't know why you laugh. It's a fearful thing to be imprisoned in a harem. Hafsa Pasha has bought you, and you must submit to him. You must be a faithful wife, imprisoned within a harem."

"Oh, a fine old wife I'll make!" chuckled the other. "Oh, dear! It's a mighty dangerous lark, but it's awful funny, just the same."

Suddenly Nadia clutched her companion's shoulder.

"Tell me who you are!" she commanded.

"All right. Keep your nerve. Don't utter a sound. Are you ready?"

Nadia nodded.

"I am Dick Merriwell."

The girl almost fainted.

"Dick?" she gasped—"Dick? Impossible! Yet—yet I believe you—you are! Why, how——"

"Can't explain in full. Fooled old Hafsa. If Ras al Had does not fail me we'll have you out of this before morning. If Hafsa only knew——"

A sound behind him caused Dick to turn and spring up.

The door had opened to admit Hafsa Pasha himself, and his face was contorted with rage. He glared at Dick.

"So you did fool me, did you?" he snarled. "You thought I could not hear your words, but there is a place in this wall where a person listening outside may hear and understand the softest whisper spoken here. You deceived me, but it will cost you your life!"

He drew a knife.

From some part of his clothes Dick Merriwell whipped forth a heavy revolver, which he leveled at the Turk's heart.

"Halt right where you are!" he commanded clearly. "Another step and I'll drill a hole through your dastardly heart! I came prepared for any emergency."

Hafsa Pasha uttered a cry. It was answered somewhere outside the room.

But at that moment there came from a distant portion of the house the sound of heavy, crashing blows.

The Turk turned pale.

"What's that?" he gasped.

"I have an idea it is Ras al Had," said Dick. "Stop! Stand in your tracks! Try to leave the room and I'll drop you!"

The noise ended in one great crash. Then came the soft shuffle of many unbooted feet.

"Hither, sheik!" cried Dick.

There was a struggle outside, smothered cries, a fall. Then Ras al Had, backed by several black men, together with Brad Buckhart and Dunbar Budthorne, appeared at the door.

"Still safe, boy?" said the old Arab. "I dared not wait. I had located the maiden's prison, and I sent one of my servants to bring her friends from the hotel. Then the carriage came, and I saw you enter, accompanied by him. I feared longer delay would be fatal for you. We broke down the door. It seems that we entered just in time."

Hafsa Pasha was yellow with rage.

"You old scum of the desert!" he cried. "You are behind it all! It is your trick!"

"I have not forgotten the fate of my brother, Pasha. His blood still cries aloud for vengeance."

"I'll send you to join him!"

The Turk had held the drawn knife hidden at his side. Now he made a pantherish leap toward the sheik and struck with the weapon.

Ras al Had threw up his arm. The blade was driven through the muscles of the forearm, but with a sweep the Arab sent Hafsa Pasha reeling.

At the same time he unsheathed his sword.

When the Turk recovered and sprang forward again he was met by the sheik, who drove the keen sword straight through Hafsa Pasha's body.

Brad Buckhart had reached Nadia, and she fainted in his arms.

CHAPTER XVII—A POSITION OF PERIL

There was a great uproar in Damascus. Hafsa Pasha, an exiled Turk, once a prime favorite of the sultan, had been slain in a house within the city limits.

Rumors were flying thick. There were many wild stories passing from lip to lip. It was said that some foreigners had been concerned in the murder of the Pasha.

The Moslems were aroused, and they cried out for vengeance on the murderers. Some said that a young and beautiful girl was connected with the affair. It was said that she had tried to delude the Pasha and rob him, and that in the end her friends, aided by a number of Arabs, had slain him in the house to which the girl decoyed him.

These stories aroused the followers of "the true faith" to a high pitch of resentment against all "infidels" in the city at that time. Foreign visitors were warned against appearing on the streets, as they were almost certain to be insulted, roughly treated, and possibly slain.

The foreigners stopping at the German hotel were greatly alarmed. Many of them were planning to get out of the city as soon as possible. Some had heard the early mutterings of the storm and departed on the train for Beirut that day.

Professor Z. Gunn was in a state of great distress. He found Dick Merriwell and Brad Buckhart in earnest consultation in their room and seized each by an arm, exclaiming:

"This is what it has come to! You can see! We're still in the sultan's domain. There will be an uprising. These fanatical Mohammedans will massacre every Christian and foreigner they can find in the place! I feel it coming. The streets of Damascus will flow with blood before night!"

"You're excited, professor," said Dick.

"Excited!" squawked the old man, nearly losing his false teeth and clapping his hand over his mouth to keep them from popping out. "Ugh! Oogah-um! Cluck! Who wouldn't be excited? There is something to get excited over. We're almost certain to be murdered!"

"I hardly think," said Merriwell, "that the Turks will carry it that far. We are citizens of the United States, with passports in our pockets, and the sultan would have trouble on his hands with Yankee Doodle Land if his subjects were to murder us."

"You bet your boots!" put in Buckhart.

"But the sultan isn't here to stop it," spluttered Zenas. "The Turks are infuriated over the death of Hafsa Pasha. They are urging on all Moslemites in the city. None of them are counting on the consequences. They'll do the killing first and consider the consequences afterward."

"No one has been killed yet," said Dick. "The authorities are doing their best to hold the fanatics in check."

"By promising to apprehend and bring to justice the murderers of Hafsa Pasha. Mind, they say murderers. That means every one who was present when the man was killed. I was right here last night when Brad and Budthorne went away with those Arabs. I'm not the only one who knows about that. You were present, Richard, when Hafsa Pasha's enemy slew him. Brad was there, Budthorne was there. You're all concerned. You're every one wanted as participants in the crime."

"It was vengeance," said Dick. "Ras al Had, the old sheik, slew Hafsa Pasha, and Hafsa Pasha years ago sold Ras al Had's brother into slavery. The sheik found his brother dying in the desert, and he swore to have vengeance on the treacherous Pasha when the time came. Last night he carried out his oath and then fled from the city."

"That won't clear you, boys," asserted Professor Gunn. "You were concerned in breaking into the house where the Pasha was killed."

"Sure we were," nodded Brad Buckhart.

"I didn't have to break in," said Dick, with a twinkle in his dark eyes.

"Oh, Richard," said the professor, "that was a scandalous thing! Hafsa Pasha was fooled into paying a large sum for you."

Buckhart grinned.

"He was going to add you to his harem, pard. Oh, say! that was the richest

thing ever! The boys will die of laughter back at school when I tell them about it."

"Hem! haw! Haw! hem!" coughed the professor. "It looks just now as if you'll never get back to Fardale to tell anything. Drat it, boys, you don't seem to comprehend the terrible peril we're in!"

"We comprehend it, all right," asserted Dick; "but we can't see any sense in getting ratty over it. Hafsa Pasha got exactly what was coming to him."

"You bet he did!" nodded the Texan.

"The right or wrong of it makes no difference to these fanatics," said Zenas. "They won't stop to ask who was right and who was wrong. They'll just go ahead and chop up the foreigners. This hotel is watched. The people in it have been warned against leaving it. A few got away on the train, but the rest of the people in the place are panic-stricken. They realize the danger. The trouble with you two reckless young rascals is that you do not realize the peril. Somebody is going to confess that two persons left this hotel in the night. They'll trace the two. It will be found out that you were present when the Pasha was killed, and your lives will not be worth a penny. Oh, it's a—— Hark! What's that?"

From the street outside came a peculiar, blood-chilling sound. It was like the low snarling of many voices, and it grew louder and louder until it became a sullen, muttering roar.

The three rushed to the window and looked out. What they saw caused the old professor to turn pale and faint.

A great mob had gathered in front of the hotel, all Turks or people of the Moslem faith, and others were coming rapidly from many directions.

The crowd was armed with clubs, sticks, stones, and so forth. A few flourished swords or other deadly weapons.

They are crying out in their indignation against the foreigners. A crooked, befezzed Turk was their leader. At sight of him Dick Merriwell uttered an exclamation.

"See that man?" he cried—"the one who is urging the mob on?"

"I sure see the varmint," nodded Buckhart.

"Well, he's the old wretch who bribed Ras al Had's black men to betray Nadia and myself."

"That dog, eh?" growled the Texan, taking something from his pocket. "Well, I reckon I can just about shoot a couple of holes through his big ears at this distance."

Professor Gunn uttered a squawk of terror and clutched the wrist of the grim-faced boy from the Panhandle country.

"You're crazy, Bradley!" he gasped. "You're mad!"

"I admit the accusation," said Buckhart. "I am mad—a heap mad."

"If you were to fire at that man it would precipitate the destruction of this

hotel and the murder of every inmate!"

"The professor is right, Brad," said Dick quietly. "Put up your gun."

"I'd certain like to——"

"Never mind that. Put up the weapon and bide your time. You may be compelled to use it in self-defense before this day is over. Hear those creatures!"

The mob was howling:

"Death to the foreigners!"

"Kill the infidels!"

"Burn their hotel!"

"Destroy them! Destroy them!"

"Death to the unbelievers!"

Wildly waving his arms, the crooked old Turk shrilly yelled:

"They have defiled our city and our temples! They have basely murdered one of the true faith!"

"Ah-yah!" snarled the mob.

Then some one hurled a stone. There was a crash of glass in the lower part of the hotel. A volley of stones followed, smashing glass and raining against the building in a shower.

"It begins to look pretty bad," confessed Dick.

Dunbar Budthorne, followed by Nadia, came hurrying into the room. Budthorne was agitated and his sister was very pale.

"What is happening?" asked Dunbar.

"Take a look out of this window and you will see," answered Dick.

Nadia pressed forward to look, but drew back, shuddering.

Brad sought to reassure her.

"It's only a lot of crazy fools," he said. "Don't be frightened, Nadia."

"But they are mad! They mean to destroy the hotel and murder us all!"

"I don't reckon the governor will permit that."

"Can we do nothing?" asked Budthorne. "Can't we apply to the American consul?"

"We tried that yesterday when Nadia disappeared," reminded Dick, "and the American consul was out of the city."

"Then there is the British consul. Surely he will act if we call on him."

"I doubt if he has the power," said Professor Gunn. "We are in a terrible predicament. I fear the horror of 1860 is about to be repeated."

"What happened in 1860?" asked Dunbar.

"Six thousand unarmed and unoffending Christians and foreigners were massacred in Damascus, and nearly twice as many more outside the city, in Syria."

"Oh, dreadful!" gasped Nadia, growing faint and being assisted to a chair by Buckhart. "What if it happens again? Oh, I believe it is going to happen!"

At this juncture a fiercer outburst of noise rose from the street, and again Dick Merriwell looked out of the window, the others pressing close behind him.

It seemed that some one from the hotel had ventured to step outside to address the crowd. Instantly his words were drowned by howls, and shrieks, and curses, while a shower of missiles drove him back to shelter.

Then some one espied the little group in the upper window and called attention to it. Instantly the crowd began shouting insults at our friends and shaking their fists at them.

"Take Nadia back from the window, Brad," advised Dick, in a low tone. "Keep her mind distracted as much as possible from this."

Again Buckhart conducted the girl to a chair.

"Better all get back," said Professor Gunn. "We're just adding to their fury by standing in the window and watching them."

They moved back a little, but the mob continued to rage and snarl, like a pack of infuriated wild animals.

"Was no one punished for the other massacre?" asked Dick.

"The powers of Europe finally interfered," answered the professor. "The Turkish government was compelled to punish some one, so Ahmad Pasha, the governor, lost his head. That was about the extent of the punishing."

"Well the present governor ought to remember Ahmad Pasha. If he isn't careful he may lose his head."

The whole hotel was in a state of great excitement, as Dick learned by stepping outside the room, and listening. Women were weeping and wailing, while white-faced men hurried hither and thither, up and down, without seeming able to decide on anything. He heard two men talking, and one was telling the other that already the mob had murdered a man in the open street.

"It's pretty serious," Dick decided. "Once let a mob like that get a taste of blood, and there is no telling where the affair will end. I fear this will be a bloody day for Damascus. If they begin killing, the odds are against any one of us escaping with his life."

One of the men below was speaking again.

"They say this thing started over the unwarranted murder of an exiled Pasha."

"That's the report, and I was told a few minutes ago that the mob declares the murderers of the Pasha are in this very hotel. That is why it has been singled out as the first point of attack."

"I've heard more than that," declared the first speaker. "I understand that the real cause of all this trouble is an American girl, stopping here. She must be an adventuress, for they say she got gay with the Pasha who was murdered, and decoyed him to the place where he was assassinated. I've seen the girl, too."

"You have?"

"Yes. She's here in company with her brother. Has been here several days. Day before yesterday two boys and an old man joined them."

"Oh, I've noticed that party. And they say this girl caused all the trouble?"

"Yes. Some of the rest of the party were concerned in the murder of the Pasha. The crowd outside is demanding that this girl and her friends be given up. If the proprietor will surrender them it is possible the rest of us may escape with our lives."

"Then we had better unite in urging him to give that party up. It's a case of self-preservation, and——"

"I favor it myself."

Dick had slipped quietly down the stairs, and now he suddenly confronted the two men. His face was pale, but his dark eyes flashed.

"I have a few words to say to you," he said, his voice low but clear and steady. "I don't know where you hail from, but I do know that you are two of the most contemptible cowards it has ever been my bad fortune to chance upon. No one but cowards would think of surrendering an innocent and helpless girl into the hands of a maddened and murderous mob, like the one outside this hotel."

Having expressed himself in this manner, the fearless American lad stood squarely facing them both.

There was a hush.

Outside the mob was heard muttering sullenly.

The two men gazed at Dick in surprise. One was a tall man, the other decidedly below medium height.

"Why—why——" gasped the short man, and then choked, as if unable to find further words.

The tall man shook himself together.

"Look here, you insolent young puppy," he exclaimed, "how dare you come here and use such language to us?"

"Yes," put in the short man, with an attempt at bluster, "how dare you?"

"I do not think there is much to fear from two men who would deliberately talk of surrendering an innocent girl into the hands of a murderous mob," retorted Merriwell.

"Innocent girl!" sneered the tall man.

"Yes, innocent! Be careful, sir! I'm only a boy, but I know the girl, and another insulting slur from your lips will be resented in a manner you will not like."

Both men were astonished.

"Why, I believe he would tackle us both!" muttered the short man.

"You know the girl, do you?" said the tall one, overlooking Dick's threat, as

if he did not consider it worth noticing further. "And you claim she is innocent?"

"I happen to know."

"Didn't she decoy the Pasha to the house where he was murdered?"

Dick's lips curled.

"Instead of that, sir, she was seized while walking on the street, her escort assaulted and knocked down, and the ruffians imprisoned her in a house. Where were you yesterday that you heard nothing of this?"

"We made a trip into the country outside the city," explained the little man.

"It happens that I was the one accompanying her when she was seized and carried off," added Dick. "By chance this girl, who is perfectly innocent of wrongdoing, fell beneath the notice of Hafsa Pasha, a bad man, who resolved to add her to his harem. He was baffled, and he deserved the fate he met. However, none of our party had anything to do with that. He was killed by an old enemy, whom he had bitterly wronged. These are the facts, gentlemen. Now, in order to save your fine necks you talk about turning her over to that snarling pack of wolves at the door! I am ashamed of you both!"

In spite of his youth he made them feel ashamed of themselves.

"Oh, well, oh, well," said the little man apologetically; "we didn't understand, you know. If we had——"

"But I don't fancy being talked to in this manner by a mere boy," growled the other.

"I didn't expect you would fancy it," said Dick, with continued boldness. "Lots of people do not fancy being told the plain truth. Often it cuts to the quick. If you wish to do what you can to save yourselves, be prepared to fight for your lives if the mob breaks in here, but do not talk of surrendering a girl to be murdered by that pack of maddened beasts. On the contrary, you should be ready to defend her with your last drop of blood."

Having scorched them in this manner, Dick turned and remounted the stairs.

The tall man made a move as if to stop him, but checked himself.

Barely had Dick disappeared when a figure advanced quickly from the shadows at the rear of the hall and spoke in a low tone to the two men.

"I beg your pardon," said a soft voice, with a pronounced accent that seemed to proclaim him either a Spaniard or an Italian. "I happened to overhear a part of your conversation with that boy. I know him."

The stranger was slim and dark, with a slight mustache, which curled upward at the ends. He had coal-black eyes, which were very restless and very piercing. His hands were small and slim, almost womanish.

The two men looked at him in some surprise. As they did not speak at once he went on hurriedly:

"It seems that I arrived in Damascus just in time to get into this unfortu-

nate trap, from which not one of us may escape with our lives. I am just here. I would I were elsewhere. I know that boy—know him most exceedingly well. He is a thorough rascal. He was compelled to leave England in a hurry to escape imprisonment for robbery. He is a card sharp, although, on account of his years, he does not, to strangers, seem to be such. That is why he deceives the great number of people with such perfect ease. In Italy he was concerned with a very dangerous and desperate band of criminals, and from that country he hurried with much haste to avoid punishment. Since then he has been wandering about in various lands, accompanied by another boy and an old man, who are his accomplices. They tell that the old man is the tutor and guardian of the boys, but this I do assure you is a fabrication."

"Well!" gasped the little man, in astonishment.

"Well!" exclaimed the tall man, bewildered.

"Gentlemen," said the stranger, "I assure you that I know perfectly well the complete truth of all I have said. They are traveling under false names, having somehow secured the passports of the parties they pretend to be. The only thing of truth that I heard fall from that boy's lips as I listened was his statement that the girl is innocent. She, however, with her brother, who is not strong and may be easily influenced, has fallen into the clutches of these three rascals. Without doubt they sought to use the girl as a tool to trap the Pasha who was murdered. I doubt not that they led the Pasha to believe there would be no trouble in case he seized the girl and made her an inmate of his harem. I believe it probable that they secured a large sum of money from the Pasha—and then they murdered him.

"Now, gentlemen, if, instead of giving up the girl to the mob, you will get together, seize the real culprits, tell the maddened people the truth, and surrender them, you will be doing your duty, and nothing more."

The listeners gasped again.

"Most amazing!" said the little man.

"Quite so," agreed the tall man.

"Who are you?" questioned the first.

"Your name," demanded the second.

The stranger made a graceful gesture.

"My name matters little to you. I will not speak it at present. Those rascals are wholly unaware that I am here. I do not care to have them discover it just now. Listen! The mob clamors again. The doors will be beaten down soon, and then nothing can save us. If you know these people here, lose no time in informing them of the real cause of this riot. Tell them that the guilty ones are sheltered beneath this roof. Propose to them that the three scoundrels be surrendered, for it is better that three such common wretches should be slain than that a whole hotel full of innocent people should die."

"Quite right!" exclaimed the small man.

"Perfectly right," agreed the tall man.

CHAPTER XVIII—IN A DEADLY TRAP

Dick returned to his friends.

"Where have you been, pard?" asked Buckhart.

"Just outside," was the answer. "Wanted to see what was going on in the hotel."

"I opine the whole bunch is some frightened."

"Without doubt. They have good reason to be—— Something doing!"

This final exclamation was caused by the clear, ringing sound of a bugle, coming from the streets below.

Dick rushed to the window, followed by the others.

Looking out, they saw a body of mounted soldiers coming swiftly down a street leading to the front of the hotel. They were riding at a gallop, the hoofs of their horses clattering rhythmically. An officer with drawn sword was leading them.

"The sultan's soldiers!" exclaimed Dick. "At last the governor has awakened. Without doubt he remembers Ahmad Pasha, and he does not care about losing his own head."

"Oh, the soldiers are coming to drive the mob away!" exclaimed Nadia, in relief.

"Perhaps so," muttered Brad. "I sure hope so."

"Why, is there any other reason why they should come?"

"I don't know."

Deep down in his heart, however, the Texan feared the troops were coming for quite another purpose. He feared the ruling Pasha had ordered them to proceed to the hotel and take possession of the ones suspected as having had a hand in the killing of Hafsa Pasha. If this were true, although the troops might keep them from the vengeance of the mob, it was likely that in the end they would be punished with death, or in some other manner, as accomplices of the murderer.

Entertaining these thoughts, Brad watched with the greatest anxiety the movements of the troop of soldiers. He was relieved to some extent when the soldiers charged into the mob, the officer in command ordering the gathering to disperse.

Professor Gunn literally capered for joy.

"We're saved! we're saved!" he cried. "The governor doesn't dare permit another riot!"

Then the old man seemed to realize that he was losing his dignity, whereupon he stopped dancing, straightened up, threw out his thin chest, and thrust one hand into the bosom of his coat.

"To tell you the truth, my friends," he said, "I have not been genuinely alarmed at any stage of the affair, for my judgment told me the governor would see fit to interfere before anything really serious happened."

Dick laughed.

"My dear professor," he said, "it is not possible you fancy any of us thought you alarmed in the slightest. We knew better than that. You are a man of iron nerves."

"Hum! haw!" coughed Zenas. "Perhaps not exactly iron-nerved, but I flatter myself that I have unusal acumen and judgment, and therefore I knew the affair would be checked in case the governor had time to act before the mob succeeded in doing any real damage."

In the street below the soldiers were charging up and down, scattering the crowd. The mob dispersed with great reluctance, for it resembled a pack of hungry wolves that had scented a feast.

The crooked old Turk even dared stand and defy the cavalrymen, but finally the officer in charge chased him off, belaboring him across the back with the flat of his sword.

"You deserve something worse than that, you old wolf!" muttered Dick.

Nadia was greatly relieved.

From the window they watched until the soldiers had quite succeeded in dispersing the mob, and it began to seem that the danger was over.

Then they discovered that the mounted men were being divided into squads, and soon these squads began to patrol the neighboring streets.

Dick again left the room, was gone fifteen or twenty minutes, and returned with the information that the officer had given orders that no one was to enter or leave the hotel until further notice. The guests were practically prisoners, and this seemed to indicate that the danger was not over.

Nadia's nerves were in a sad condition from the strain and the relapse. Her brother conducted her to her room. He then returned and, accompanied by the professor, proceeded to interview the German proprietor of the hotel.

Dick and Brad were left alone. The door was standing slightly ajar.

"This business had been a plenty exciting, partner," said the Texan; "but I opine she's practically over now."

"I don't know about that," said Dick, shaking his head.

Buckhart was astonished by the grave manner of his companion.

"Don't know?" he cried. "Why, the mob has been scattered and the soldiers are guarding the house."

"Yes, the soldiers are guarding the house, and orders have been given that no one shall leave it."

"That is so none of the inmates shall fall into the hands of the mob."

"Is it?"

"Isn't it?"

"I'm not sure. I would feel easier if I knew that was the real reason why no one will be permitted to leave."

"Then you have an idea that there may be another reason?"

"I have."

"I don't opine I just understand."

"I'm afraid we are prisoners here, held until agents of the governor can make an investigation and find out who was present last night, when Hafsa Pasha met his end."

The Texan sprang up and stood in an attitude of mingled surprise and consternation.

"Great tarantulas!" he exclaimed. "There may be something in that!"

Dick nodded.

"There may be," he said. "If there is——"

"You and I may be arrested and thrown into prison any time."

"Nadia, also."

"Thunder! Dick, I'm afraid you've hit the truth. What will happen if you are right?"

"We'll find ourselves in a very nasty scrape; but it will be hardest on Nadia. Think of the poor girl thrown into——"

"I can't think of it! I decline! Pard, we must find a way to get her out of this scrape. If the governor really sends officers here to investigate, we'll be pointed out, and then it will be too late. What can we do?"

"We seem to be caught like rats in a trap," admitted Dick.

A low laugh sounded outside the door, which was pushed open, and into the room softly stepped the dark stranger who had spoken with the tall man and the short man in the hall below.

"Yes, Dick Merriwell," this fellow said, with malignant satisfaction, "you are caught, and there is no way for you to escape. When the officers come I shall take

great pleasure in pointing you out to them. The time of my revenge and triumph has come at last."

"Miguel Bunol!" cried Dick, in astonishment.

It was, in truth, the young Spaniard who had once attended school at Fardale—the fellow who had caused the Budthornes so much trouble in England and Scotland.

Since leaving Italy Dunbar and his sister had taken precautions to throw Bunol off their trail, in case the venomous rascal persisted in seeking to follow them. Their success had led them to believe they would see no more of him.

But in some manner Bunol had traced them to Damascus and overtaken them there.

Dick's eyes glittered as they fell on the fellow, while every muscle in Buckhart's body seemed to become taut, and the Texan crouched a little, like a person ready to make a leap.

Bunol closed the door and placed his back against it, facing the two boys he hated. He stood there, surveying them insolently, deep satisfaction in his face and bearing. His manner seemed to say: "I am master of the situation at last, and now I propose to crush you."

"Woof!" finally burst from Buckhart, like the snort of a startled wild beast. "It sure is that same onery coyote, partner!"

"It would be well for you if you restrained your tongues and called no hard names," said Bunol.

"The varmint is plenty bold, Dick," said Brad.

Merriwell recovered command of himself, and he seemed quite calm and undisturbed, although inwardly a tempest was raging.

"So you have followed us here, Mig Bunol?" he said.

"As you see," retorted the Spaniard, "I am here. You thought yourselves very clever, but you could not fool me for long."

"We certain fooled you a plenty for a while," muttered Buckhart.

"What do you think you can accomplish by chasing us round the world?" questioned Dick. "Thus far you have met with nothing but failure."

"My time of triumph has now come. Up to this day fortune has favored you. Now it has turned against you."

Bunol showed his white teeth in a pantherish grin, that caused the sharp ends of his tiny, pointed mustache to curl upward more than usual.

"Do you think so?"

"I know it."

"How do you know it?"

"You are in a trap from which there is no escape."

"You mean——"

"You were concerned in the murder of Hafsa Pasha."

"We were not!"

"You were present when he was killed, and that is enough. Oh, I knew it before I stood outside this door and listened to your talk just now."

"Eavesdropper!" snarled Buckhart.

"Rage and growl!" laughed the Spaniard. "Little good it will do you! You are like the wolf that snaps with its teeth at the steel trap into which it has stepped. I heard you talking, but it told me nothing new. I will tell you something. You have made the right guess about the soldiers. They are guarding this house in order that you may not escape until the Pasha causes your arrest. That will not be long. The proper officers will come very soon. Then I shall point you out to them. Once you have been arrested for that crime no power on earth can save you from being beheaded. How like you the prospect, my insolent American friends?"

"So you propose to help the Turks in taking us?" questioned Dick.

"I shall help them by pointing you out. In return, I hope I may secure the privilege of being present when you are beheaded. It will give me great joy to stand near and watch the executioner shave off your heads. Ha, ha, ha!"

Buckhart's strong fingers closed in an intense grip that made his fists like two knobby iron balls.

"Mebbe you won't be in condition to do any talking when the officers come," muttered the Texan.

"Oh, I am watching you," declared Bunol. "I have a pistol ready for use. If you force me, no hesitation will I have in using it."

"Why did you come here?" asked Dick. "Why didn't you hasten to send information to the governor?"

"Because that was not necessary, and I came here to enjoy the pleasure of witnessing your disturbance in the face of certain death."

"You came to gloat over us?"

"Have it so, if it pleases you. Why shouldn't I? Many times you have gloated over me."

"Never! Never yet have I gloated over a fallen enemy."

"But you have been triumphant, and I have suffered defeat."

"Which you deserved, for you are a scheming snake in the grass!"

"You say so, but you are not my judge. Many times have you brought disgrace and shame upon me, until I have come to hate you with a burning hatred. But for you, Nadia Budthorne would now be my wife."

"And such a fate would be more terrible than death for any refined girl. When the officers come, you will denounce her if you denounce us. You cannot help it, for it is said that a girl was concerned in the affair that ended with the death of Hafsa Pasha. Are you wretch enough to send Nadia to her death?"

Bunol shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps if she were to swear to marry me——"

"Which she'll never do, you dog!" panted Buckhart.

"Oh, is it you who think you will secure her, you uncouth creature from a land of savages!" cried Bunol. "Bah! It's a pity you cannot see yourself as you are, hulking, awkward, dull-faced, slow-witted, unpolished, swaggering, conceited—a worthy product of that raw portion of your miserable country called the West. You Americans of the East are more than enough bad; but those who come from the West are sickening to one of culture and refinement."

Buckhart took a step toward the insulting speaker, but Bunol whipped out a pistol.

"Stay!" he hissed. "One more step will be the last you will ever make!"

At Dick's elbow was a writing desk, on which lay a heavy metal paper weight.

While Bunol's attention was given almost wholly to Brad, Merriwell's fingers closed quickly on the paper weight. Suddenly, with a motion that was amazingly rapid, he lifted his hand and launched the paper weight at the Spaniard.

Bunol attempted to dodge, having seen the sudden jerking movement of Merriwell's arm.

He was a second too slow.

The paper weight struck him squarely between the eyes, and he dropped unconscious to the floor.

Like a panther, Dick crossed the floor in one great bound and fell on Bunol, his fingers closing on the fellow's windpipe.

Breathing hoarsely, Buckhart was on hand to render assistance.

"Great work, pard!" complimented the excited Texan. "He had me under his gun, and I couldn't do a thing."

He picked up Bunol's pistol, which had dropped from the fellow's fingers.

"This may add to our armament," he observed. "We're likely to need all the guns we can handle pretty soon."

Dick had discovered by this time that there was no need to choke the Spaniard, for the paper weight had fixed the fellow so he would offer no resistance.

"Bring me the rope we found in the wardrobe yonder, Brad," directed Merriwell, "and bring it quickly. We must tie this fellow up good and solid before he recovers."

The other boy hastened to bring the rope.

"Looks like somebody used this for a trunk strap," he observed. "Lucky they left it in the wardrobe."

Dick directed Brad to cut the rope into pieces of certain length, and with

these pieces he proceeded to tie Bunol in such a manner that it would be difficult for the fellow to do much more than wiggle a toe on recovering consciousness.

"He'll be liable to howl some when he comes round," observed Brad.

"Not when I have finished with him," asserted Dick. "Hand me that clothes brush."

Buckhart did so.

Dick took the brush across his knee and broke off the handle in a twinkling. Then, with the aid of his comrade's knife, he soon fixed the handle so it would serve as a gag, and this he fastened between the teeth of the Spaniard.

As he was completing this task, Dick saw that Bunol was coming round. The fellow's breast heaved, he opened his eyes, and for the time being he seemed completely bewildered and at a loss to understand what had happened.

"Now, what will we do with him, pard?" questioned Brad.

"We'll chuck him into that closet," decided Dick, at once.

A step sounded outside the door.

Instantly Brad leaped to the door and set his shoulder against it.

"Go on, Dick!" he palpitated. "Get Mig out of the way somehow, while I hold the door."

Merriwell stooped to lift his enemy. As he did so his eyes met those of Bunol, and in the dark orbs of the helpless Spaniard he saw a murderous look of hatred.

On Bunol's forehead there was a swelling, but otherwise he seemed unharmed.

Dick had been compelled to jerk the paper weight at the fellow with a quick, snapping movement. Had he thrown the thing with all his strength the rascal's skull might have been fractured.

Unheeding the venom in Bunol's glance, Dick lifted the fellow's limp body and carried him quickly across the room, thrusting him into the small closet. He placed the helpless wretch in a sitting position on the floor, with his knees curled up to his chin, and then closed the closet door.

Some one was rapping on the door Brad was holding.

"Let them in," directed Dick coolly.

Buckhart stepped away from the door.

Professor Gunn entered, followed by a huge black man, wearing immense brass rings in his ears.

"This man wants to speak with you, Richard," said the old pedagogue. "He has a message for you."

Dick was very much surprised.

"A message for me?" he said. "Who from?"

"You should know," said the black man, in astonishingly good English. "Look

at me. We have met."

"Why, it's Assouan!" cried Merriwell.

"I am Assouan," bowed the black man.

"But here—what are you doing here? How did you get here?"

"I came from my master, the great sheik."

"But he is in flight. He——"

"He sent me."

"Why?"

"I bring a message from him."

"What is it?"

"He fears greatly that you will find yourself in great peril here in Damascus, and that you may be slain."

"His fears seem to be well-founded. Is that all the message?"

"He commanded me to return to the city, seek you and learn if you were indeed in danger."

"I certainly appreciate the sheik's thoughtful concern. We are indeed in danger, and by the time you can return, and so inform him, it will be too late for him to render any assistance, should he be so inclined."

"The noble sheik gave me instructions, in case I should find you in peril. He bade me suggest that you should attempt to escape from the city in disguise, at which you are exceeding clever."

"A great idea!" Merriwell exclaimed. "It might be done."

Then his face fell.

"But I am not the only one in danger, and I have no disguise save that which I used last night. I might make myself up like an English or American girl, but little good it would do, for the mob is aroused against foreigners, and a girl could not pass unmolested through the streets. Besides that, how could I get out of this hotel? The place is guarded."

"As to that," said Assouan, "I can show the way to leave the hotel unobserved, even as I entered it."

"You did have to come in, that's a fact. How did you pass the soldiers on guard?"

"There is a way. I know it."

"And you can show us how to leave this place without being stopped by the soldiers?"

"I can."

"That's a plenty interesting!" muttered Buckhart.

Professor Gunn was greatly excited.

"Then show us—show us!" he fluttered. "We'll be glad enough to get out."

"It would do you no good as you now are, for you would be compelled to

appear on the open streets, and the people of the city are greatly aroused against foreigners. You would be attacked on the street. Better the mercy of the soldiers than that of the mob."

"Then you cannot help us, after all!"

"My instructions were to aid only the boy who restored life to the noble sheik when he was struck by the iron chariot of the infidels."

"Well," said Dick, "if Ras al Had fancied I would desert my friends in order to save myself, he made a mistake."

"If you remain, you may be beheaded."

"Unless there is some way for the whole of us to get out, I shall remain and take my chances."

Assouan regarded Dick with evident surprise.

"It is better that one should escape than that all should be slain," he declared.

"In order to escape, I would have to obtain some complete disguise that would enable me to pass along the streets of the city without molestation. How could I thus disguise myself?"

"Abraham, the Jew, who did so once before, could attend to that."

"Abraham? But I could not go to his place of business."

"I could bring him here."

Dick's eyes began to shine.

"Can you do that, Assouan?" he asked.

"So I have said."

"Wait a moment; let me consult with my friend."

He drew Buckhart aside.

"Brad," he said, "I have an idea."

"Fire her at me, partner," invited the Texan.

"If old Abraham can do the trick—if he can bring disguises enough—why should not we all make up and endeavor to get away before we are apprehended by order of the governing Pasha? Old Abraham will do almost anything for money. Let him bring disguises for us, for the professor, and for Budthorne and Nadia. He ought to know how to rig us up so we can pass through the streets without bringing the fanatics down on us. I'll instruct Assouan to bring the old Jew here in a hurry."

"It's worth trying, Dick. Anything to save Nadia!"

Merriwell turned to the black messenger.

"Is Abraham a man of education?" he asked.

"He has traveled," was the answer.

"Do you know if he can read English?"

"I do not know, but it may be that he can."

"Wait."

Dick strode to the desk, seized a pad of paper and a pencil and wrote rapidly. In a few moments he had finished.

"What are you trying to do, Richard?" asked the old professor, who had been nervously walking about the room. "You have not sought my advice."

"There is no time for that now, professor," declared the boy.

He thrust the folded paper into one of Assouan's huge hands.

"Carry that to Abraham without delay if you wish to aid me," he directed. "Let no other person see it. Time is precious."

The black man bowed low and hurried from the room.

"It is possible that the preservation of our lives depends on the success of this scheme," said Dick. "I wrote urging Abraham to come and bring disguises for five of us, including one woman, explaining briefly that we desired to escape by passing through the streets of the city in open day."

"No use! no use!" exclaimed Zenas hopelessly. "It is the wild project of harebrained youth. We cannot escape that way. If we try it, we'll simply fall into the hands of the enraged populace and be torn to pieces."

"Well, we'll make the attempt if Abraham comes and rigs us out for it," said Dick decisively. "I hope he'll come. I know a message from Ras al Had will influence him some, and on top of that I have promised to pay him a liberal sum. If he disappoints us, our fate will lie in the hands of the American consul, and it's likely he may be unable to do a thing for us."

CHAPTER XIX—BRAD AND NADIA

In an astonishingly brief time Assouan returned, with the old Jew at his heels.

Abraham was carrying a heavy bundle. He looked rather pale and frightened.

"My tear poy," he said, "vy haf you got yourself indo such a pad scrape? If I hat known last nighdt vat you vas intending to do, I would nefer hat anyt'ing to do vit id. So helup me, I vos in dancher to pe murtered vor id. If id vos voundt oudt I had somedings to do vid disguisin' you as a girl, and that you dit vool der Pasha that vay, dey vould tear mine shop down un drag me t'rough der streets.

I haf peen in terror off my life efer since I heardt vot had habbened. I vould gif somedings handsome if you vos a t'ousandt miles vrom Damascus this minute. Id vos to helup you get avay that I came ven Assouan toldt me an' gafe me your writings. I haf peen to Enklandt and America, and I read your writings vell."

"Then don't lose time in talk," said Dick; "but get about the job of rigging us up. Fix us so we can escape, and you will be in no danger of exposure."

The boy realized that it was fear, more than anything else, that had brought Abraham to them in this time of trouble. The Jew believed that Dick, should he be seized by the officers of the city, as an accomplice in the murder of Hafsa Pasha, would then tell how, disguised as a girl, he had deceived the Pasha. He would be compelled to state where he obtained the disguise, and that would turn the wrath of the enraged Moslems against old Abraham.

"You said dere vas fife peoples to be disguised," said the Jew.

"Yes."

"I see only t'ree."

"Brad, call Budthorne and his sister."

Dunbar and Nadia appeared in a few minutes, and Dick explained his plan of escaping in disguise.

"Do you think it necessary?" asked Dunbar. "It seems to me that we are safe now, for the soldiers are guarding the hotel, and the mob is held in check."

Then Dick was compelled to tell that the soldiers were guarding the hotel while waiting for the governing Pasha's order to arrest the foreigners supposed to be concerned in the murder of Hafsa Pasha.

"It is Nadia we must get out of here, first," said Dick. "You should be ready to take any risk to get her away."

When Budthorne was satisfied that Merriwell was not mistaken he immediately urged his sister to permit herself to be disguised and to follow the advice of the clear-headed American lad.

Realizing her own frightful peril at last, the girl willingly consented.

"It will pe easy to disguise her," declared Abraham.

"Then," said Dick, "lose no time in making her up. Disguise Budthorne, also, and let Assouan conduct them from the hotel while you are rigging the rest of us up. He should be able to conduct them to some place of safety and then return for us. Can you do so, Assouan?"

The black man declared that he could.

The old Jew opened his pack and spread out his supply of costumes. He swiftly prepared for work.

In truth, it was an easy matter to disguise Nadia. Over her regular clothes he hastily fastened a loose dress, like that worn by a Turkish woman of middle class, placed a high fezlike cap on her head, and arranged a heavy veil over her face

below the eyes, the brows and lashes of which he had touched up with pencils, giving them the peculiar cast seen in those of Moslem women.

All this was done so swiftly and so completely changed Nadia that the watchers were astounded.

Abraham lost no time.

"Nexdt," he called.

Dick pushed Budthorne forward.

Buckhart improved the opportunity to take charge of the girl. They stepped outside the room, while Abraham went to work on Dunbar without delay.

Excited people were still moving about in the hotel. The sound of many voices came to the boy and girl. Some one was at the foot of the stairs.

Brad urged Nadia into her own room, the door of which was standing ajar. She grasped his hand and drew him after her, whispering:

"I am terribly frightened now, Brad. Don't leave me alone."

"All right," said the Texan. "Don't you be frightened. We're going to get you out of this scrape all right. My pard has a long head on his shoulders."

"Dick is a wonderful boy," declared the girl.

Again Buckhart felt a thrill of jealousy, but he resolutely thrust such a feeling from his heart.

"He's a corker!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "See how quick he caught onto the plan of old Ras al Had and turned it to the benefit of us all."

They were in the room, but the door was still left ajar.

"I know I'm a big blunderer beside Dick," Buckhart went on. "Of course you're not to blame for liking him best, Nadia. It's only natural you should, and——"

"But I don't like him best," she hastily cut in.

"You can't help it."

"You're mistaken, Brad. I admire him for his courage, his resourcefulness, his loyalty and all that; but you are just as brave and just as loyal, and I—I like you—even better."

He caught her hand again and gave it a squeeze.

"I don't see how that can be," he muttered huskily.

"It's true. You don't think I would deceive you, do you?"

"No, but——"

"But what?"

"I'm going to confess," he said, almost defiantly. "I know I made a fool of myself after we joined you here in Damascus. I never felt that way before, and I hope I never shall again. It's an awful mean feeling. I was jealous."

"Jealous, Brad?"

"Yes, I was. First I was jealous because I thought you had taken too much

interest in Hafsa Pasha. Then I was jealous of my pard, as I couldn't see any reason why you should care more for him than for me. And through my fool actions I brought all this trouble on us. If I had not gone off by myself, kind of eating my heart out, and then ran away when you and Dick saw me and tried to overtake me, you would not have been lost in the streets, would not have enraged the Moslems by entering one of their temples, and would not have given Hafsa Pasha's tools a chance to seize and imprison you. Oh, I was all to blame, and I know it. I'm a big——"

She placed a soft hand over his mouth.

"I won't listen to such a defamation of the character of my dearest friend!" she whispered.

He kissed her fingers.

"But it's the truth," he asserted. "I hope you'll forgive me and forget it, Nadia."

"Why, you dear fellow, you talk as if you had committed a crime!"

"I feel that way. If we get out of this scrape alive, Nadia, I'll try to prove to you that I'm not such a fool as I seem. You see!"

"Oh, hush!"

"You see!" he repeated.

"But we may none of us escape. Isn't it terrible! I don't like Dick's plan for Dunbar and I to leave first. I think we had better wait and all go together. If we——"

She stopped, checked by a dull, muffled, murmuring roar that seemed to come from the streets not far away. The sound made her tremble.

"The mob has not dispersed!" she whispered. "It has been driven away, but it is returning! I fear we're lost!"

He did his best to cheer her and give her courage. Somehow she was overcome by a great weakness, and suddenly he found her in his arms. The situation thrilled him, and he held her tight, while he continued to speak earnest words of reassurance.

A sound behind them startled them. Brad turned his head, still holding Nadia.

A befezzed Turk had quietly entered the room. His eyes seemed to glitter triumphantly. Lifting a hand and pointing at them, he exclaimed:

"I have found you! I have come to take that girl away!"

Nadia uttered a low cry of terror.

Swinging her onto his left arm, Buckhart suddenly whipped out a pistol and covered the Turk.

"Stand back!" he growled. "Advance a step and I'll blow a hole through you!"

The man was startled and alarmed by this quick action on the part of the Texan. He fell back, exclaiming:

"Don't shoot!"

"I certain shall," said Buckhart, "if you move another inch. Stand there and lift your dirty paws above your head!"

The threatened man hastily put up his hands, at the same time spluttering:

"Great Scott! You're altogether too handy with your pistol! Put it up, Brad! Don't you know me? I'm Budthorne!"

Nadia gave a start, straightened up a little, and stared at the speaker.

"Dunbar," she gasped; "Dunbar, is it you?"

"Of course it is," was the answer. "I wanted to see if my disguise was any good; but I didn't care to have Buckhart jab a pistol at me so promptly."

"Great horn spoon!" muttered the Texan, recognizing Budthorne's voice and manner of speaking. "I sure was fooled all right. Say, you certain look an Allah worshiper to the life. If you ever get outside of the hotel in that rig, you'll be all right."

Assouan now appeared.

"We should lose no time," he said. "Abraham is disguising the others. I must lead you to a place of safety and return for them. The mob is again trying to approach the hotel, and the soldiers do not seem strong enough to hold them back much longer."

"It doesn't seem right for us to go until all are ready," said the girl. "I think we should not."

Dick appeared now.

"You must go at once," he insisted. "It is better so. Were we all to attempt to pass through the streets together it would add to the danger of being detected. Abraham is disguising Professor Gunn. Assouan can conduct Nadia. She will seem to be a Turkish woman with an escort. Budthorne can follow at a little distance, keeping them in sight. Assouan will return for us the moment he has placed you where you will be safe. By the time he gets back, we'll be ready to start. Do not hesitate, Nadia—go!"

"It is best, sister," said her brother.

She grasped Brad's hand once more and gave it a pressure, looking into his eyes, which smiled at her reassuringly, although his heart was heavy with dread.

"Come quickly, Brad," she whispered. "I shall be in mortal terror for you until I see you again."

Assouan led the way downstairs, the brother and sister following.

From a distance again came an outburst of sullen muttering, like the growling of wild animals held in check. The Moslem mob was growing impatient. The streets in the vicinity of the hotel were choked. At any moment the crowd might

break from the control of the soldiers.

"It certain puzzles me up a plenty to know how Assouan is going to get them out of this building and away from here," said Brad, following Dick back into the room where the old Jew was at work.

Already Abraham had transformed Professor Gunn into an apparently dirty and ragged old Armenian. He was putting on the finishing touches when the boys entered.

"Waugh!" grunted Brad. "Is that Professor Zenas Gunn, of Fardale Academy? Why, I feel a whole lot like kicking that old beggar."

"I know I'm a shameful sight," moaned Gunn; "but to save my life I have permitted myself to be changed into a scarecrow."

"Ven you get der street indo," said the old Jew, "it will pe vell vor you to keep your mouth still and haf nothing to say. If you talk you vill betray yourseluf. Now you vos done. I vill attend to der poys."

Dick pushed Brad forward, and Abraham began on him. With marvelous rapidity he turned the boy into a young Greek. The work of the Jew was of the most skillful sort, yet it was performed so rapidly that it actually seemed careless and slipshod. The results attained, however, spoke for themselves.

Dick's trousers were turned up, his shoes stripped off, coarse and dirty socks pulled on over those he wore. He was given a pair of trousers which came to his ankles, a long, loose, dirty blouse that fell to the knees, a coarse, heavy pair of slipper-like shoes, and finally a battered and soiled fez, with a tassle that hung down over one ear. His face was bedaubed and rubbed with grease paint until his complexion changed to dirty yellow. The Jew touched his features here and there with a pencil, and last the contour of his nose was altered by a bit of nose putty. This seemed to be an afterthought on the part of Abraham, but it finished the effect and altered a handsome boy into a slouching, disreputable-appearing young rascal, such as Merriwell had noticed occasionally on the streets of Damascus.

Outside the hotel there was a sudden great shouting.

"Some one has arrived," announced Brad, who had ventured to peep from the window.

The tall form of Assouan appeared in the doorway.

"Hasten!" he exclaimed. "The Pasha's officer has come to take you! He is at the door."

CHAPTER XX—THE FLIGHT

"Too late!" groaned the professor, almost collapsing. "I feared it!"

"Thank goodness Nadia got out of the trap!" muttered Buckhart.

"If you do nod escape now id vas der death of Abraham!" groaned the frightened Jew.

Dick sprang past Assouan and reached the door. He looked out and then turned.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "There is no one here."

"He is below," said the black man. "Be quick! There is still a small chance for you."

"Come on, then!" exclaimed Brad.

But Dick saw the old professor had sunk down weakly on the couch, and he leaped to the side of Zenas.

"Come, professor!" he breathed, grasping the hand of the unnerved man.

"Go!" gasped the old pedagogue weakly. "Save yourself, if you can. Leave me. My strength is gone. God bless you, Richard! If I am beheaded by these fanatics, tell my wife—tell the boys——"

In spite of Professor Gunn's lack of nerve, in spite of the spells of trepidation which seized him, in spite of his many weaknesses, the old man had won a warm corner in Dick Merriwell's heart, and Dick was not the boy to desert in time of peril any one for whom he had the slightest regard.

"I'll not tell them anything!" he said grimly. "If you do not brace up and attempt to escape, I'll remain here with you, and you know what that means. You may not be harmed, for you were not present when Hafsa Pasha was slain; but as surely as I fall into the hands of the sultan's officers, there will be very little show for me. Unless you brace up now, you may destroy me."

Dick spoke in this manner thinking it might be the best way to arouse the old man, and he made no mistake.

"I—I—I——" stammered the professor.

Brad urged them to hasten.

Suddenly Dick picked the professor up by main strength and placed him on his feet. Supporting the old man, he hurried him toward the door.

Assouan had grown impatient and seemed ready to dart away. His eyes were rolling, showing the whites in a manner that betokened the man's nervousness and increasing fear. He urged them not to waste another moment.

Abraham was left praying in the room.

"Lead on," said Dick.

Suddenly Professor Gunn displayed an astonishing burst of energy. He broke from Dick and ran to Assouan, imploring the messenger of the sheik to make all haste.

Down the stairs sprang Assouan, and what seemed to be a trembling old

beggar kept close at his heels. Buckhart came next, with Dick bringing up the rear.

At the foot of the stairs suddenly appeared a Turkish officer with a drawn sword. He did not attempt to stop Assouan, but lifted his sword and placed the point against the breast of the disguised professor, commanding him to halt.

At the same instant, it seemed, a human figure fairly shot over the head and shoulders of Buckhart, over the professor, and landed with full force on the officer, hurling the latter to the floor.

It was Dick Merriwell, who had acted with lightning-like swiftness.

The Turk was knocked senseless, and lay stretched on the floor at the foot of the stairs, his sword beneath him.

Dick leaped up.

"Come on, professor!" he hissed. "Come on, Brad!"

He caught hold of Gunn once more, and away they went, finding it no simple matter to keep track of the black man, who was now fleeing for his own life.

Other inmates of the hotel, all in great alarm, got in their way, but were thrust aside. They rushed through several rooms. Twice some one tried to stop them. They stumbled down some dark steps. Doors were flung open before them and slammed behind them. Some curtains were thrust aside, disclosing a dark passage. Into this they plunged. It brought them quickly to other rooms and other doors that yielded to the hand of the black leader. They were bewildered, for none save Assouan knew whither they were going. Their wild rush hither and thither seemed aimless. At last, in a storeroom, where there were boxes and bales and casks, the sheik's messenger thrust a bale aside and seized an iron ring that seemed set in the floor. With a surge, he lifted a trapdoor, beneath which was a place of utter darkness.

"Down!" he sibilated, pointing into the darkness. "Down, and wait for me to follow!"

Brad dropped through recklessly and disappeared. The professor followed, breathing a prayer.

Behind them there were cries and the sound of many feet. Their flight had attracted attention. Several persons were coming, and they might be Turkish officers.

Dick slipped through the trap and dropped.

He fell on his hands and knees, and instantly realized that, were he to stand erect, his head and shoulders would protrude through the square opening above.

He felt one of his companions at his side. He looked up and saw the muscular black man again moving the bale. Assouan sat with his legs dangling through the opening. The trapdoor was leaning against his shoulder. He reached over, grasped the bale and pulled it against the door. Then, swiftly, yet with delibera-

tion, he slid down through the trap, permitting the door to close, with the tipped bale settling over it.

In the darkness, beneath, the four fugitives crouched on the bare ground, hearing above their heads the feet of their pursuers.

After a time the tread of feet and murmur of voices ceased. Evidently their pursuers had departed baffled.

Then Assouan whispered directions to them, and, one after the other, the black man leading, they crawled many feet along what seemed to be a trenchlike passage beneath the building.

Finally Assouan paused. He rose, and they saw a gleam of light that came faintly through another square opening. This dim light revealed their conductor opening another trapdoor by lifting it. He stood erect, and then sprang lightly up through the opening.

"Oh, Richard!" whispered Professor Gunn; "this is a terrible experience! If we escape with our lives, I shall always think of this day with unspeakable horror."

Assouan was stooping over the opening, with his hands outstretched. He directed them to rise and permit him to assist them.

Dick urged the professor onward. The black man grasped the hands of the old pedagogue and lifted him through the trap.

Buckhart needed no assistance, nor did Dick, who swiftly followed him.

Assouan closed the trapdoor behind him.

"Wherever are we?" inquired the Texan.

The black man explained that they were in a building that stood on the opposite side of a narrow street at the back of the German hotel.

They had actually crept through a passage that led beneath this street.

This passage had been made years before, by the former owner of the hotel, who feared a repetition of the massacre of 1860, and wished a means of escaping from the building in case it should be assailed by a mob. It was doubtful if the present proprietor knew of the existence of the passage.

The old sheik, Ras al Had, had chanced by accident to discover the passage while storing goods in the building into which it led from the hotel. At the present time this building was used as a storehouse. The room in which they found themselves was poorly lighted. They were again amid boxes and bales of goods.

Outside, between them and the hotel, they heard the sound of many voices. The mob was there, but the soldiers were still holding the crowd in check.

"My goodness!" murmured Professor Gunn. "It seems to me that we're still in a nasty scrape. We haven't escaped."

Without a word, the black man led the way to another part of the building. A heavy door faced them in one dim corner. This door Assouan knew how to open, but he paused and listened some moments before unfastening it.

"When the door is opened," he finally said, "step quickly across and into a doorway directly opposite."

They were ready. The door was opened, and, without loss of time, they crossed a space of about three feet between the two buildings and entered the doorway spoken of by Assouan.

The black man followed them as soon as he had closed the door after leaving the storehouse. They found they had stepped into a room where, sitting cross-legged on the floor, an old sandal maker was at work. To their surprise, this old man, after looking at them curiously, kept on about his labor without speaking a word.

Assouan explained that the man was a mute.

The black man made some signs, which were answered by a single signal from the sandal maker. Then Assouan again instructed his disguised companions to follow him, pushed aside a curtain from a low doorway, stooped and passed into an adjoining room.

This room was on the front of the house. The door to the street stood wide open. A middle-aged Syrian woman was working at a rude loom, weaving some sort of goods. Two girls, one about thirteen and the other eight or nine, were sorting and preparing the strands used by the woman in her work.

The woman glanced at Assouan, but seemed to give none of the others a look. Dick fancied an expression of alarm swept over her face, but she continued stolidly and steadily about her work.

The children stared at them until the woman spoke in a low tone of command, seeming to rebuke them for their rudeness, after which they resumed the work of sorting and preparing the strands.

Assouan tossed a piece of silver before the woman, but she kept at her work, without seeming to notice it. Dick would have dropped more money, but the black man restrained him with a gesture and a shake of the head. They passed out upon the street, one at a time.

Assouan strode in advance. Professor Gunn, looking like a ragged old Armenian, doddered along behind him. Buckhart, as a respectable young Greek, kept by himself, taking the opposite side of the street. Dick imitated the shiftless, shuffling walk of the young vagabonds of the city, thus making his assumed character seem real, and followed them all at a little distance.

The street was well filled—almost crowded—with excited people, who were talking of the murder of the Pasha and the belief that those concerned in the murder were trapped in the German hotel.

Although the people were speaking in various languages, Dick understood something of what was being said, and he realized that he was surrounded by Moslems.

Although Abraham had performed his work well, he had made a mistake in disguising the old professor as an Armenian. The Turks were aroused. Although they were stirred up against foreigners, their hatred for the Armenians was liable to burst forth any moment.

Thus it happened that a group of young men suddenly stopped the disguised professor and began hustling him about.

The old man said not a word, for he knew he would betray himself if he opened his mouth.

Brad Buckhart paused and watched proceedings, his hands clenched and his aspect indicating that he was on the verge of pitching in and assisting Zenas.

Dick made a warning gesture, which Brad saw. He also paused, but he looked on as if quite indifferent to what was taking place.

Assouan had disappeared. Fully understanding the terrible peril his companions were in, he had no desire to become involved, and, therefore, he had hastened on.

Our friends were left to their fate in the streets of Damascus.

CHAPTER XXI—SAVED BY PRAYER

One of the mob struck the old professor in the face. Instantly Dick started forward.

Then a most fortunate thing happened.

From the balcony of a near-by minaret a muezzin sent forth the call to prayer:

"God is great. There is but one God. Mohammed is the prophet of God. Prayer is better than sleep. Come to prayer."

Immediately a wonderful change came over the crowd on the street. As one man, they lifted their hands to their ears, the lobes of which they touched with their thumbs, keeping their hands outspread, at the same time beginning to repeat certain passages from the Koran. This was the beginning of the Mohammedan prayer.

The professor seemed forgotten. Dick realized instantly that this was a time to be improved, for the shortest prayer would require several minutes.

The call to prayer had come at a moment most fortunate for Professor Gunn. Instantly Dick hurried past the confused and trembling old man, hissing in his ear:

"Follow me!"

All around them were the praying Mussulmans, but not one of them put out a hand to stop the disguised foreigners.

Brad followed after Dick and the professor, thus acting as a sort of rear guard.

Once or twice Dick looked back to see if Zenas was following. Terror had given the old man strength, and he was not far from the boy's heels.

Even when the devotees of Mohammed fell on their knees and began beating their heads on the ground, the fugitives continued to thread their way amid the half-prostrate figures.

Dick did not know which way Assouan had gone, but he did know it was best for them to get as far as possible from the vicinity of the German hotel.

Of course, he hoped the black servant of Ras al Had would again appear, but he did not linger to look around for him.

They were fortunate in getting out of the thickest of the crowd before the devotees had finished praying.

"That sure was a close call," muttered Buckhart. "I reckoned we were all goners."

"Why didn't you leave me, boys?" asked the professor. "I was keeping silent to give you time to escape."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Dick resentfully. "I hope you don't think we're that sort!"

"I hope so some myself!" growled the Texan. "Where is that thundering nig—I mean colored gent?"

"He's skipped," said Dick.

"Hiked and left us to go it alone, eh?" nodded the Texan. "Well, that's a plenty fine!"

"We may find him," suggested Zenas.

"Not likely," said Dick. "I fancy he thought the jig was up when he saw the crowd fall on you, as he shook the dust of that locality off his feet."

"That will leave us in a beautiful scrape; but we're outside that hotel," said Brad. "It was a close call there, for we barely succeeded in slipping through the fingers of the Turks. How are we going to get out of this dirty old city, Dick?"

"I can't say," confessed Merriwell.

"Talk about the wild and woolly West!" growled Brad. "Why, since the days of Sam Houston and Davy Crockett there never were such doings in Texas as we've struck right here in this dried-up, outlandish country. If I ever get back home to tell about these doings, I won't dare to tell, for they sure would lynch me

as a liar."

"We're talking too much," said Dick. "We're attracting attention. Stop talking and keep moving."

He led the way and they followed blindly.

Suddenly, as they turned from one street into another, the most appalling medley of horrible sounds burst upon their ears. It seemed that a hundred human beings were being tortured in the most excruciating manner, and were howling forth their dying agonies. There were yells, screams, roars, and, amid it all, a sort of muffled music, as of drums and other instruments.

"Great catamounts!" gasped Buckhart. "We're up against a whole tribe of Injuns at a scalp dance, or I'm mistaken!"

Dick was startled and filled with wonderment.

"Listen!" he urged.

"Hu, ya Hu! Hu, ya Hu! Hu, ya Hu!"

These were the only words they could distinguish amid that terrible howling.

The professor had been agitated, but now he was the first to recover.

"That cry, 'Hu, ya Hu,' means 'God, oh God,'" he explained. "It is the cry of the howling dervishes. Look—there is the open door of a temple, and the sounds come from within. It is shortly after midday prayer on Friday, which is the time for the howlers to do their work."

"Well, of all howling I ever heard, that sure is about the most hair lifting," declared Buckhart.

They were compelled to pass the open door of the temple or turn back, and they decided to keep on.

As they slipped past, they obtained a peep within the place. They saw a number of dancing, whirling, twisting, writhing men within, apparently in a perfect frenzy—stamping their feet on the floor and yelling madly, their lips covered with foam and their eyes closed. Others were stretched prone on the floor. Some were sitting about beating on drums and playing queer instruments.

That was all they saw, for they dared not linger to look into the place, had they so desired.

They had not proceeded much farther when Buckhart stopped, a look of gloom in his eyes.

"Whatever are we going to do?" he inquired.

"We must get out of the city just as fast as we can," declared Gunn. "By this time it must be known that we escaped from the hotel and how we escaped."

"That's a fact," nodded Dick.

"But we can't leave the city without Nadia and her brother," protested Brad. "We can't leave them here in this nest of crazy fools, to be butchered!"

"We must leave them to Assouan," said Merriwell. "I believe he will get them out of Damascus."

"I don't know about that—I doubt it! He skipped in a hurry to save his own black head."

"For which we cannot blame him greatly. What have we done that he should risk his life as far as he did for us?"

"Why, we sort of resuscitated his old master when the whole bunch thought him killed."

"And for that Ras al Had sent Assouan back into Damascus, with instructions to aid us in escaping from the city, if possible. Assouan stuck by us longer than I thought he would. But after he left us it is probable he hurried to Nadia and Budthorne and guided them out of the city."

"Mebbe so," muttered Brad; "but I doubt it. I shan't be for hiking out until I feel sure Nadia's not waiting for us somewhere."

"Unless we make all haste in escaping," said the professor, "we shall not escape at all."

"Why not?"

"As I said before, by this time it must be known that we escaped from the hotel in disguise."

"Why?"

"Have you forgotten Miguel Bunol?" asked Dick.

"Thunder! I had forgotten him!"

"We left him in that closet."

"Sure."

"He must have been found ere this."

"That's right."

"Although he was bound and gagged, he could hear what was going on in that room."

"Yes."

"Well, you see, he knows how we were disguised."

"Straight goods."

"And he hates us with an undying and deadly hatred. He will lose no time in telling the Turkish officers how we escaped. The city will be scoured for us. Every avenue of escape will be closed. Our disguise will be worse than useless as soon as Bunol talks. We shall be captured. Our heads will be chopped off as soon as the Turks can attend to the job."

"Pretty bad," admitted Buckhart grimly; "but, all the same, I hate to run for it, thinking all the while that we may be leaving Nadia and Budthorne to be murdered. Can't we find them? Is there no way to——"

"What show have we to find them by searching aimlessly through the

streets, Brad?" said Dick. "Assouan hid them somewhere with a friend. Even the Turks might not find them, but they could have no trouble in finding us wandering about in the open streets. Be sensible, old man."

The Texan surrendered at last.

"All right, pard," he said; "we'll get out of the city, but I'll never forgive myself if any harm comes to Nadia."

CHAPTER XXII—IN THE DESERT

Three days have passed, and it is morning on the desert. The huge, golden sun rose over the edge of the barren world, and its rays fell on a lonely camel train that was already on the move.

The camels were loaded with merchandise from the interior and bound for the port of Akka.

A noted Syrian merchant was in charge of the train. There were other Syrians, but most of the camel drivers were Arabs.

Mounted on one of the many camels were Dick Merriwell and Brad Buckhart, minus their disguises and wearing their own clothes.

Professor Gunn was swaying and rocking miserably on the back of another camel, his companion being one of the Syrians.

Brad Buckhart looked no less disconsolate than the professor, while the expression on Dick Merriwell's face was not one of absolute satisfaction and contentment.

Brad was grumbling.

"Pard, I sure am a heap sore."

"So am I," admitted Dick. "Camel riding isn't what it's cracked up to be. It is enough to make any one sore."

"I didn't mean that I was sore in that way."

"Didn't you?"

"No. I'm thinking that we were fooled a plenty."

"How do you mean?"

"By that old black wretch, Assouan."

"Go on."

"Haven't you thought the same thing?"

"Perhaps so; but go ahead and tell me just what you have thought."

"Why, you know how Assouan met us at the city's gate just as we were escaping from Damascus."

"I know."

"He told us he had hustled Nadia and Budthorne out of the town and sent them off on fleet horses, guided by Gumar, to join Ras al Had's train."

"Correct."

"And having but one good horse, which he was riding, he could not provide for us and help us overtake them."

"So he said."

"Having given us that game of talk, he induced us to follow him and got us into this merchant train, bound for Akka and the coast."

"Which seems lucky for us——"

"Then," cut in the Texan. "Now——"

"Well, at least, we escaped being seized and beheaded. It is plain Assouan kept his promise when he said he would try to put the Turks on a false scent, and so give us a chance for our lives."

Brad shook his head.

"Mebbe he did. Anyhow, he didn't tell these people who we were, and you happened to have money enough on you to induce the old rascal at the head of the train to take us along. He knew there was trouble in Damascus, and that foreigners were in danger, but he didn't know the full truth. Had he, I opine he would have dodged us a heap. I judge he's getting some suspicious of us now, and he wishes he hadn't bothered any with us, for all of the money."

"He did act queerly last night," admitted Dick. "He tried to question me. I think he has been talking with the professor and the professor has talked too much. But, then, we are now some distance from Damascus."

"All the same, Dick, you know we won't be safe until we get out of this infernal country. But I don't propose to leave until I know what has become of Nadia."

"Assouan promised to bring us together."

"And I am beginning to believe he lied!"

"What?"

"I'm afraid the black rascal fooled us."

"Why should he?"

"Why shouldn't he? They're none of them to be trusted. Nadia is a beautiful girl."

"Well?"

"In this country very beautiful girls are worth as much as five thousand dollars each."

Dick was startled.

"Oh, you're wrong, Brad, in thinking Assouan would play such a trick! He wouldn't dare."

"Why not?"

"Ras al Had is his master——"

"And Ras al Had is a fugitive himself. If caught, he will lose his head for killing Hafsa Pasha. Assouan may have feared the sheik before that happened, but fear cannot keep Assouan loyal to Ras al Had now."

Dick realized that this was true.

"And do you fancy Assouan would carry Nadia off with the intention of selling her?"

"I fear it, partner, and that's what's disturbing me a plenty."

Dick thought for some moments on what had taken place. Finally he shook his head decisively.

"I am not willing to believe that," he declared. "Somehow, I am confident that Assouan is faithful as a dog to Ras al Had. He put himself to altogether too much trouble about us, in case he were otherwise. Even after getting Nadia and her brother out of Damascus, he turned back to look for us."

"But he deserted us in the street at a critical moment."

"Because, as he frankly stated, he believed we were lost, and he could do nothing to save us. Had he attempted to do anything, he would have sacrificed himself and left Nadia and Dunbar still helpless in the trap."

"Well, it may be he's on the square; but it certain seems to me he's had time to keep his word and show up with Nadia before this."

At this moment there were signs of confusion in the train. The camel drivers in advance halted and uttered strange cries. Others took it up. Those cries produced still greater confusion, which seemed like consternation.

"What is it?" asked Brad.

Dick shaded his eyes and peered away across the broken waste of desert.

"Horsemen!" he exclaimed. "There is a large body of mounted men coming toward us from the north."

"Sure thing," said the Texan, discerning them. "I wonder if Assouan is going to make good at last!"

The horsemen came on rapidly, a tiny cloud of dust rising behind them. Soon they were near enough to enable the men of the camel train to discover an interesting thing concerning them.

"Bedouins!" was the cry.

Both of the American boys had heard of those desert wanderers and ma-

rauders, but now, for the first time, they beheld genuine wild Bedouins at home.

The Syrians and Arabs of the train seemed in great fear and consternation, for they saw the approaching body of men outnumbered them, and it was impossible to know the purpose of the wild horsemen.

The Bedouins wore loose, flowing garments and hoods on their heads. They were all armed to the teeth, as is the habit of the desert Bedouin.

Dick was thrilled by the picturesque spectacle. He had seen pictures of Bedouin riders, and he was forced to confess that he was not disappointed in the real article.

The merchants huddled their loaded camels together and waited in helpless suspense for what was to take place.

Without waiting for his camel to kneel, Zenas Gunn slid down to the ground, risking both neck and limb, and fell sprawling. He gathered himself up and rushed forward to Dick and Brad.

"We're all going to be murdered!" he spluttered. "Those wretches are going to kill us and plunder the train!"

Dick forced the camel to kneel, after the manner of camel drivers, a trick he had learned by observation. Down went one end of the beast, flinging the boys forward and forcing them to hold fast with all their strength; then down went the other end, hurling them back and snapping their teeth together.

After that they stepped off.

"It is useless to resist!" moaned the professor. "We have no chance against those wretches! Oh, boys, this is the end—the awful end!"

"You've lost your nerve again, professor," said Dick. "Brace up. Let's not die until we have to."

The Bedouins had halted at some distance. For a moment they huddled together, and then out from the mass of horsemen rode one, whose bearing was that of a leader.

Alone and unattended, this man fearlessly rode toward the train. Grasping his gun in the middle, he lifted it high above his head with one hand, a signal which the merchant at the head of the train seemed to understand, for he slowly advanced to meet the wild chief.

The chief was a handsome man at a distance, being of unusual size and wearing the barbaric garments and decorations of his people. He had a jet-black beard, and there was something uncommon about his features. The horse he bestrode was a clean-limbed, fiery animal.

"If I had my camera now!" exclaimed Dick; "but that camera by this time is in Alexandria, with the rest of our baggage, which we sent on ahead of us."

"I wonder what's up," muttered Brad. "The Syrians are mightily disturbed."

"Perhaps the Bedouins are going to demand tribute, and the merchants do

not wish to pay."

"Is that a custom?"

"I don't know; but it seems that those armed wanderers could hold up a train like this and get everything they asked."

The chief was seen speaking with the merchant. In a few moments the latter turned, saw Dick and his friends, and called:

"Mr. Merriwell is wanted."

"What's that?" gasped Buckhart, in the greatest amazement. "Did you hear it, pard? Did he say you were wanted?"

"That's what he said," nodded Dick.

Professor Gunn began to shake and choke.

"Richard, oh, Richard!" he exclaimed huskily. "These wild men have been sent to search the desert for you and take you back to Damascus! You are lost!"

"Great grizzlies!" burst from the Texan. "Is it possible that can be correct?"

"It may be," said Dick quietly.

"Well, don't you surrender!" panted the Texan. "I'll back you up, pard. We'll die with our boots on, fighting to the last ditch! We're both armed."

"Alone, the two of us would stand no show against those warriors of the desert," said Dick. "However, let's not borrow trouble. Let's find out if there really is any trouble coming."

Saying which, he boldly walked out.

The Bedouin chief gazed in silence at the advancing boy, while the Syrian merchant hastened to say:

"Here is the lad for whom thou hast called, Ali Beha. Take him and do thy will."

Brad had followed Dick, while the old professor timidly brought up the rear.

The men of the train watched in anxious silence.

Buckhart heard the words of the Syrians, and immediately he plunged a hand into a pocket where his revolver lay.

"There you have it, Dick!" he half snarled. "Now you know what's coming! Ready for business!"

Merriwell made a calm, restraining gesture.

"Steady, old man," he flung over his shoulder. "Let's talk to Ali Beha and find out what he's going to do. That is the best plan. Then possibly we'll raise an objection. Better not be too hasty."

Experience and the example of his brother Frank had taught Dick to keep his head in times of peril.

As usual, Buckhart was ready to fight. For all of the apparent peril, he was undaunted. Beyond question, he was rash and reckless; but to his credit it must be said that he was ready to surrender his life in defense of his rights and his friend.

There was not one drop of cowardly blood in Brad's body. If, on account of his assumed bluster and swagger, any one took him for a chap who would show the white feather in a pinch, that person was certain to be surprised and quite upset.

At school a few of the boys had fancied the Texan to be a bluffer, but when they had attempted to "call him," he had given them, one and all, a setback by "making good." Physical injury in a fist fight had never daunted him, and now, in the face of possible death, he was just as nervy and indifferent to the result.

Once on a time Dick Merriwell had been impulsive, reckless and thoughtless, but he had learned to govern himself and to consider the consequences of any act. This had changed him greatly. Not that he had lost a whit of courage, but courage is not mere reckless thoughtlessness. The really brave man is the one who considers the consequences, realizes the full extent of the peril, and then calmly faces it.

It is possible that association with Brad, whom he often found it necessary to restrain, had tended to make Dick more conservative and careful, for he realized that two reckless persons who spur each other on are certain to commit many follies.

So Merriwell warned his chum against haste and then turned to the chief of the Bedouins to talk the matter over.

"You have called for me," he said. "I am here. What do you want?"

Ali Beha was still surveying the calm, clear-eyed American lad with deep interest. He took his time about answering Dick's question.

"Thou art very young," he finally observed.

"Which is not an answer to my question," retorted Dick.

"Thou art a mere boy."

The Bedouin seemed disappointed.

"Acknowledged," nodded Dick. "What does Ali Beha want of a mere boy and a stranger in this land?"

"Thou hast friends near?"

"Two of them are with me."

"But there are others?"

"Possibly."

"They assisted thee in leaving Damascus?"

"Yes."

"But they are not with thee now?"

"Do you come from them?" asked Dick quickly.

"It is even so," declared the chief. "Thy friend sent me."

"You mean—— Name him!"

"I can speak no names. I am directed to bring thee and thy companions."

Dick turned to Brad, speaking in a low tone:

"He must be from Ras al Had. The old sheik sent him for us."

"I reckon you're right, pard," nodded the Texan, the cloud having left his face. "At last we have heard from Ras."

Professor Gunn placed a still quivering hand on Dick's arm.

"Be cautious, Richard," he warned. "I am afraid of these wild men. It is said that they are very treacherous. Better ask him openly if he comes from the sheik."

"He has said that he can call no names. It is evident that Ras al Had has taken precautions. In case he is captured and condemned for slaying Hafsa Pasha, he does not wish to associate us with him in that business, and so his name is not to be mentioned before these Syrians."

"You have figured it out, partner," put in Buckhart. "I opine we've had our little scare for nothing. The sheik has sent for us in his own way, and we'll be liable to find Nadia and Budthorne by accompanying the Bedouins."

Ali Beha remained passive and apparently indifferent while they were talking this matter over.

Dick turned once more to the chief.

"How far away are our friends?" he asked.

"Beyond the horizon," was the answer.

"You will take us to them?"

The Bedouin bowed.

"I have come to do so," he declared.

"That settles it," laughed Buckhart. "I judge we're ready and willing to go."

The prospect of soon joining Nadia filled the Texan with enthusiasm and relief.

"All right," said Dick. "We'll soon be ready."

He then turned to the Syrian merchant, whom he thanked for such favors as they had received.

The merchant made a deprecatory gesture and declared that it was nothing, which he well might have done, considering the fact that he had been well paid for those favors.

It did not take our friends long to make arrangements for accompanying the waiting Bedouins.

The people of the train were greatly relieved, and they lost no time in preparing to move onward once more.

As Dick, Brad, and the professor followed Ali Beha, they looked back and saw the head of the train already in motion, with the camel drivers and their loaded "ships of the desert" falling into line in regular order.

"I certain am plenty glad to abandon camel riding," grinned Brad. "I'd rather ride a pitching cayuse than a hump-backed camel, for a bucker won't buck forever,

while a camel does keep up that rocking, swaying, back-breaking movement just as long as he travels. I suppose one might get used to it in time, but I'd rather be excused some."

As they drew near the Bedouins they discovered that the men who had seemed so picturesque at a distance were unkempt and dirty, although none the less fierce on close inspection.

These wild men regarded our friends with an air of curious contempt. There was nothing of friendliness in their manner.

Arrangements were quickly made for the boys and the professor to mount behind three of the Bedouins. Zenas was assisted to his seat behind a thin, dirty chap, and told to cling fast to the man by clasping him around the body. This the old pedagogue did, although he made a wry face over it.

Dick could not wonder at Gunn's repulsion, for he, also, found himself mounted behind an unkempt rascal, whose matted hair and beard looked as if it might be infested, and who gave forth anything but an agreeable odor.

When all were ready, the Bedouins uttered a yell, and, with their chief in advance, went tearing across the barren country.

That was a ride long to be remembered. Mile after mile was covered at high speed by the spirited horses. When the animals bearing double burdens showed signs of flagging, the Bedouins halted and our friends changed to other horses.

The sun grew hot and beat upon them with baking fierceness. The air was dry and their throats parched. The country became wilder and wilder. Once they saw another camel train in the distance.

At last they entered a hilly region, where there was more vegetation. Finally, from an elevation, they saw before them a group of black tents, not far from which, in a valley, were some herds.

Straight toward the square black tents rode the Bedouins. As they approached a number of their own people were seen waiting for them.

Buckhart was craning his neck and peering over the shoulder of his companion on horseback, hoping to obtain a glimpse of Nadia; but no female was to be seen about the encampment.

With a yell the desert Nomads swept down to the camp and leaped from their horses, which they immediately turned over to the care of other men.

Professor Gunn was exhausted, and he reeled like an intoxicated man as soon as he stood upon his feet.

Dick looked around searchingly. Ali Beha appeared before him.

"Where are our friends?" impatiently asked the boy.

"Peace," said the chief. "Thou should not be impatient. Before thou canst see them it is necessary that thou shouldst be searched for hidden weapons."

Merriwell took a step forward, assailed by sudden forebodings and sus-

picions. He saw the fierce-looking men gathered close about them, each with weapons ready for use.

Buckhart, also, was startled and aroused. He pressed to Dick's side, hissing:

"Something crooked, pard! I'm afraid we're trapped!"

"Why should we be disarmed?" demanded Dick. "We are harmless and——"

"It is the rule," said Ali Beha grimly. "No one not of our people shall be permitted to carry arms while among us. There can be no exception for thee."

"It sure is a trap!" whispered the Texan. "If we give up our arms, we're goners!"

Dick thought swiftly, and he decided at once that resistance was folly. Were they to attempt it, they would be crushed, perhaps murdered, in a twinkling.

"We're in your hands, Ali Beha," he said. "We have trusted you, and we must continue to do so."

Immediately our friends were searched by the Bedouins and deprived of their weapons.

Ali Beha stood with folded arms and watched.

The professor made no remonstrance, but on his face there was a look of helpless despair that was pitiful to see.

Buckhart was pale, his lips pressed together and his jaw squared.

Dick's dark eyes flashed and his nostrils dilated. Although he submitted without another word of protest, there were resentment and anger in his pose.

"It is well," said the chief.

"Now, where are our friends?" cried Merriwell suddenly. "We wish to see them. Have you deceived us?"

"Thou shalt see that I have not. The friend who sent for thee is in yonder tent. He is waiting to greet thee. Enter."

The chief made a sweeping gesture toward one of the larger tents.

Both Dick and Brad started toward this tent, but immediately the Texan was stopped, while the chief informed him that he was not to enter.

"If there's any trouble, pard," said Buckhart, "just raise the war cry. I'll try to join you."

Dick nodded and walked into the tent, the flap of which he was compelled to lift.

A single person occupied the tent. He was sitting on a mat at the rear, smoking a cigarette. His garments were Turkish and there was a fez on his head. About him there was something familiar.

A muttered exclamation of surprise rose to Dick's lips. Dropping the tent flap behind him, he stepped quickly forward. As he did so the cigarette smoker lifted his head, and young Merriwell was face to face with Miguel Bunol!

CHAPTER XXIII—THE FOUNT OF FURY

"You?" exclaimed Dick, in astonishment.

Bunol inhaled a deep whiff of smoke, permitted it to escape in a thin, blue cloud, and smiled triumphantly.

"As you see," he said insolently.

"Here?" gasped the American boy.

"Here," nodded the Spaniard.

"I don't understand it!"

"I didn't think you would."

Dick's hands were clenched and his breast heaving. He stood staring at his malignant and persistent enemy, his heart overflowing with anger.

Bunol was languidly triumphant, his contemptuous glance an irritating insult, his triumphant smile like a stinging blur in the face of the duped lad.

"Fooled!" muttered Dick bitterly.

"Completely," nodded Bunol.

He was enjoying his triumph to the fullest. He felt that this was his hour, and he meant to make the most of it.

It was a moment when a weak boy in Dick's place would have collapsed. Dick did not. Although astonished and dismayed for the moment, he showed no sign of weakness.

Bunol laughed harshly.

"You have pretty good nerves," he admitted; "but I think you do not yet understand the situation. Look, Merriwell, you are in my power!"

"Where do you obtain the power?"

"I have it. You left me tied and gagged in Damascus, while you made good your escape. Only for the uproar in the hotel you would not have escaped. I beat against that closet door, but no one heard me for a very long time. I was in there hours. It seemed days. I suffered. My jaws ached, I was suffocated, I nearly perished. When they did find me and pull me out the exhaustion so overcame me

that I could not talk. I tried to tell them how you had escaped, but my senses fled. Not until the following morning could I tell. Then it was too late."

"Which was our good luck," said Dick quietly.

"I had heard enough while in that closet to know something of the course you might pursue. I resolved to follow you. I found a Bedouin chief, Ali Beha, who knew the country about for hundreds of miles. I paid him well to aid me in finding you. He is chief over many men, and all the country was scoured in search of you. Finally we learned that you were with a camel train bound to the south. Then we located the train. Ali Beha went for you, while I waited here until he should bring you to me. I knew you expected to hear from the friends from whom you had become separated, so I told him to say a friend had sent for you, but to mention no names. You were fooled with ease the greatest, and now I have you—I have you!"

Again Bunol laughed.

"You are surely the most persistent rascal in the world," said Dick.

"Perhaps so. Many times you have thought me crushed, but each time I rose again."

"You are sure to come to some bad end in time."

"But you will not live to know about that."

"I presume you mean to murder us?"

"Oh, not with my own hands! I would not take so much trouble. But I shall see you suffer—I shall hear you whimper and beg!"

"You think you will."

"I know. I have bought these dirty Arabs, and they are ready to do my bidding. I shall take great pleasure in having you stripped and whipped until your back is cut into ribbons. This before I bid you a last farewell and return to look for Nadia Budthorne, who shall become mine."

"So that is the revenge you have planned. I thought——"

"You thought—what? That I meant to have you carried back to Damascus?"

"I fancied you might."

"Ha, ha! You do not know me. I shall take no chances that my revenge may miscarry. Were you taken back to Damascus, you would appeal to the American consul, and he might save you, for, though you were present when Hafsa Pasha was slain, I know you well enough to know you took no part in that. You haven't the blood in you to kill a man outright!"

The Spaniard uttered these final words with a sneer.

"Do you think so?" said Dick, and Bunol failed to note the deadly gleam in the dark eyes of the trapped boy.

"I know it," nodded Miguel. "So I shall give you no chance to escape. You shall meet a fate worse than death. After I have seen you cut up with whips, I

shall leave you to that fate. Do you not suspect what it is?"

"No."

"Then I will tell you. These Bedouins are men who deal in slaves. You will be taken from Syria into Arabia and sold as a slave to black men. There can be no escape. You will become a beast of burden. All day long you will labor like a camel beneath the scorching sun of Arabia, driven by black men, who will beat you when you falter. Your soft and tender hands will become hardened and calloused. Your fine shoulders will become stooped and your back bent. Your rounded, muscular body will grow thin and emaciated. But the distress of body that must suffer will not compare with your distress of mind. Think of it!

"Think of yourself, a wretched and hopeless slave, lost in the desert, weary and footsore, trying to sleep at night, but haunted with dreams of your home far across the ocean. You will dream of those days when you were a leader at school; when you were triumphant on the football field or the diamond; when you were lifted on the shoulders of your shouting companions and carried aloft in triumph. Then you will 'wake to realize your pitiful state and know that never again can you look on the faces of those comrades and friends, but that you must go on through the wretched days of your wretched life, a thing to be beaten, scoffed at, spit on, and perhaps finally cut to death with whips. How like you the revenge I have planned? Isn't it a fine thing, indeed?"

Dick had grown gray and rigid as the venomous Spaniard painted the picture.

There was silence in the tent when Bunol finished. That silence was broken by Merriwell, who spoke in a low, intense tone.

"You human fiend!"

Bunol's thin lips curled back and exposed his pointed, white teeth. He was smiling.

For a long time Dick Merriwell had controlled himself in a masterful manner, but now the aroused passions of his fiery nature burst beyond suppression. Suddenly, and without the least warning, he flung himself on his enemy, whom he clutched by the throat before an outcry could be made.

Bunol was hurled flat on his back. Dick's thumbs bored into the Spaniard's throat. The knee of the American boy was planted on the breast of his foe, pinning the fellow to the mat.

"You devil!" hissed Dick in Bunol's ear. "You have said I have not the blood to kill any one, but when my hands leave your neck you will be dead!"

Bunol had goaded the boy to a point of fury that was close allied to madness.

The Spaniard was able to make no more than feeble resistance. Although he knew his peril and understood that Merriwell meant to kill him on the spot, he found himself nailed to the ground as if a stake had been driven through his

body. His jaws opened, his tongue protruded, his eyes bulged from his head and his face turned purple.

"Die!" hissed Dick.

A black cloud fell on Bunol, and in his ears there was a thundering like the roar of Niagara.

Then the flap of the tent behind Dick was lifted. A man peered in. He uttered a shout. A moment later the tent was filled with men who seized Merriwell and tried to tear him from his enemy.

Dick's hands clung fast to Bunol's throat. The expression on his face was awful in its deadly determination. The men cried out that he would kill the Spaniard before their eyes.

Some one struck the American boy in the face several times, but still his grip did not loosen in the least.

At the tent door there was further commotion. Brad Buckhart was fighting to get in.

"Pard!" he cried—"pard, what's doing?"

Dick made no answer.

At last Bunol was wrenched from Dick's grip, one of the men having loosened the boy's fingers a bit. In tearing the Spaniard free, however, they did not prevent Merriwell's fingers from lacerating the fellow's neck.

Dick was carried out of the tent. He offered no resistance after his hold on his enemy was broken. They bound him, and flung him on the ground not far from where Buckhart lay, tied in a similar manner.

The Texan squirmed over toward Dick and tried to find out what had happened. Although he plied Merriwell with questions, not a word in reply could he get. Dick lay staring straight up at the sky, and the expression on his face awed and frightened Buckhart.

The old professor was likewise bound.

After a long time the flap of the tent was lifted and two Bedouins appeared, supporting between them the limp form of Miguel Bunol. The Spaniard was deathly pale, and one of his hands kept wandering to his lacerated and swollen throat. When his eyes fell on Dick Merriwell they shone like the eyes of a venomous serpent.

Bunol was led over to Dick, at whom he glared.

"You came—near—finishing me," he said, in a husky whisper, as if every word gave him great distress; "but—but you—failed. Now it is—my turn."

He made a weak motion. Immediately several of the Bedouins seized Merriwell, unbound his hands, stripped off his clothing to the waist, and then tied him fast with his face to a heavy post set in the ground.

Two men with rawhide whips, each having many lashes, and the lashes

being knotted full of bits of iron and lead, approached at a call from Ali Beha, who sat beneath an awning not far away.

Still supported, Bunol stepped before Dick.

"The revenge I promised you begins now!" he said. "But it shall be even worse than I intended. I care not if they whip you to death! I shall laugh at your shrieks and groans. Let them begin."

One of the men was speaking to Ali Beha. The chief rose and followed this man a little apart, where he stood gazing toward a distant ridge, over which horsemen were riding. These horsemen were coming straight toward the Bedouin camp.

Quickly the Bedouins gathered with their arms, ready to repel an attack, if necessary. They set up a shout, which was answered by the approaching horsemen. This answer seemed to relieve the Bedouins, for, instead of preparing for battle, they uttered cries of welcome.

For the time attention was turned from the captive at the post. Dick was hopeless, and he paid little heed to the strange horsemen. He was watching Bunol.

The Spaniard was impatient over the delay.

"More of the dirty Arabs," he muttered.

The leader of the strangers seemed to be a man of some distinction, for Ali Beha hastened to bow low before him, his manner most humble. This leader was an old man, yet he dismounted from his horse with some sprightliness and looked around. His eyes fell on the white youth, who was tied to the post, his bare body shining in the sun.

"What is this, Ali Beha?" he demanded.

"Only a dog of a foreigner whom we are about to flog."

The stranger stepped quickly forward and obtained a look at Dick's face. Instantly his manner underwent a change. He straightened to his full height, lifted his hand, and cried:

"Release him at once! He is my friend!"

"Ras al Had!" shouted Dick, in a burst of joy. "Oh, sheik, you came just in time!"

"I reached the camel train shortly after these men took you away," said the old Arab. "They told me you had been carried off by Ali Beha, and I made haste to look for him here, knowing this to be one of his favorite camping places. But why were they about to flog you?"

"None of your business, you meddling old fool!" snarled Bunol, giving Ras al Had a thrust.

Instantly several of the sheik's followers sprang on the Spaniard and bore him to the ground.

"Bind him," commanded Ras al Had.

They obeyed, in spite of Bunol's struggles and curses.

Dick was set free at the sheik's command, as also were Brad and the old professor.

Ras al Had listened to Merriwell's story, and a strange expression came to his wrinkled face as the boy told of his enemy's plan to have him flogged and then carried into slavery in Arabia.

Turning toward the Spaniard, the sheik grimly said:

"Strip him as this boy was stripped, bind him to the post and flog him, even as he ordered you to flog this boy, who is the bosom friend of Ras al Had."

Crying and begging like a frightened child, Miguel Bunol was stripped and tied to the post. Then the men with the rawhide whips began their work. The whips whistled through the air and fell on the Spaniard's bare back, bringing the blood with the first blow.

A shriek of pain came from Bunol's lips.

Dick could not endure much of this. After a little he implored the sheik to stop it.

"But this is merely a taste," said Ras al Had grimly. "Do you think he would have stopped so soon with you at the post?"

"It makes no difference," returned Merriwell. "I can't see any human being beaten up that way."

"If I stop them now, you must promise me not to interfere further in his behalf."

"You will punish him in some other manner?"

"But not with the whip."

"All right; I promise."

Immediately Ras al Had checked the men who were wielding the whips. He spoke a few words to Ali Beha, who nodded.

Then the sheik turned to Dick and his companions and bade them prepare to leave the Bedouin camp.

"Before the sun sinks to rest," he said, "you shall be with your friends, both of whom are safe and well."

It was not necessary for our friends to spend any time in preparing to depart. They were ready and eager to go.

"What of Bunol?" asked Dick.

"We will leave him here with the friends he has chosen," said Ras al Had.

An hour later, when they were miles away, the old sheik turned to Dick, a grim smile on his lips.

"Your enemy will trouble you no more," he declared. "You will never again behold his face."

"Why not?" questioned Dick. "Do you mean that he will be slain?"

"No; but the fate he chose for you shall be his. He condemned you to be carried a slave into Arabia. That is to be his doom. It is the command of Ras al Had, which Ali Beha must obey."

CHAPTER XXIV—THE FATE OF A FOE

Dick and Brad were lounging in their room in the Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo, when Professor Gunn came sauntering in, with an unusually springy step, humming a tune.

"Ah, ha!" he cried, striking a pose. "You two rascals have your heads together, I see. What are you planning? What new trouble are you hatching up? Can't you rest easy for a brief time? I have enjoyed the last two weeks. Since our escape from Damascus, we have seen Alexandria, Cairo, the Pyramids, and so forth, and nothing unusual has happened. We have not once been in peril of losing our lives, and so now, I suppose, you are seeking to devise some method of getting us into danger. Desist—I bid you desist! Already my nerves have been shattered and my constitution ruined by what we have passed through. It was pretty bad in England. It was worse in Italy. It became still worse in Greece. We had to hasten out of Constantinople to escape with our heads. But the grand climax was reached in Syria. I tell you, boys, life was becoming too strenuous for a man of my years. A few more hairbreadth escapes would have brought about my utter collapse. I should have had heart failure. But you seemed to enjoy it. And now I suppose you are seeking to devise some means of getting us all into more trouble of the same sort. I order you to stop it!"

"It happened that we were just speaking of Miguel Bunol and his fate," smiled Dick. "I can't help feeling pity for the unfortunate fellow, but Brad insists that he received nothing worse than he deserved."

"That's what I do," put in the Texan, rising. "Bunol was thoroughly bad and vicious. His crookedness was certain to get him hanged in the end, unless some equally severe punishment fell upon him."

"His fate seems to be even worse than death on the gallows," said Dick.

"Well, pard, have you forgotten that he first condemned you to that fate?"

"No, but——"

"Don't try to make any excuses for that dog!" exploded the Texan. "He was the very limit when he attended school at Fardale. You know it, partner—you know about all the dirty, low-down things he did there. He was born a crook and a sneak. What was he doing when we ran across him in London?"

"Fleecing Dunbar Budthorne at cards."

"Worse than that. He was ruining Budthorne by keeping him full of booze. He had found that Budthorne had a weakness for drink. But, in order to complete the unfortunate fellow's destruction, Bunol had doped the man with a drug that made him crave liquor constantly. A cur that would do a thing like that deserves anything that comes to him."

"I'm not going to put up an argument," said Merriwell; "but it seems to me that one of his worst tricks was the attempt to ensnare Nadia Budthorne and force her into marriage with him."

"You bet!" roared Brad. "It makes my blood boil to think of that!"

"But we fooled Bunol very handsomely and rescued both Budthorne and his sister from the rascal's grip."

"Which was no easy job. Professor, considering everything, I leave it to you if Bunol received punishment worse than he merited, when Ras al Had turned the tables on him, and commanded the Bedouins to take him into Arabia and sell him into slavery?"

"Hum! ha!" coughed Zenas. "Well, well, it may sound harsh and cruel, but I must confess that his punishment and fate has never given me a single moment of uneasiness and pity. He was bad—about the worst scoundrel I ever saw. He brought it on himself. I agree with Brad that he merited just what he got."

"Perhaps he did," admitted Dick; "but think of the awful life he will be compelled to endure as a slave to black men in the Arabian desert! It makes me shiver."

"I opine it will make him hot," said Brad, with a faint grin.

"There is no escape for him."

"Oh, yes, there is."

"What is it?"

"Death! A fellow can always find some way to kill himself."

Dick was thinking of the horrible word picture of slavery in Arabia that Miguel Bunol had painted.

"I don't like to think about it!" muttered Merriwell, his face rather pale. "Let's do something."

"There is only one thing more left for us to do in Egypt, boys," said the professor.

"What's that?"

"Why, you might take an excursion up the Nile."

"We might?"

"Yes."

"How about you?"

"I hardly think I'll try it."

"Why not?"

"Well—er—ahem!—I prefer to remain here in Cairo. I am quite contented. I have visited the Pyramids, seen the Castle of the Nile, wandered through the Alabaster Mosque, viewed the Tombs of the Caliphs, and peered into the Haunted House of the Afrit. I am satisfied. I'm willing to be quiet and rest. I'll stay right here while you take an excursion up the river."

Dick winked at Brad.

"What's the attraction that interests you so much in Cairo?" he asked.

"Oh, no—no attraction," Zenas hastened to declare. "Nothing at all. I'm contented, that's all."

Merriwell was puzzled, for he felt that there was something behind the old man's strange contentment in that foreign city.

"Well, I don't think Brad and I will go off on any excursion by ourselves."

"Why not take Budthorne and Nadia along? That's a good idea. They'll enjoy it."

"I believe you are anxious to get rid of us. There's something doing, Brad."

"Sure thing, pard," agreed the Texan.

But the old man protested that they were quite wrong.

"I wish you to see all of the world that you can on this trip, that's all. You'll be quite comfortable on the excursion boat."

"Not if the blamed boat carries as large a cargo of fleas and biting and stinging things as we struck on the boat from Yafa to Alexandria," growled the Texan. "I was all chawed up by the time I landed from that old craft. My hide looked like a map of Asia pricked out in red splotches, and lines, and bumps, and scratches. The fleas and other varmints of this yere part of the world sure do love the taste of a foreigner."

"I don't think there will be such pests on the excursion boat," said Zenas quickly.

"Well, I fancy we can get along without making that excursion," observed Dick. "I'm for getting out of Cairo and continuing on our journey."

"So am I," seconded Brad.

"Oh, but I'm not ready," protested the professor. "My dear boys, this is the most interesting country in the world. You don't seem to appreciate it. You don't seem to understand that investigation and science have established the fact that more than six thousand years ago the people of this country had acquired a high degree of civilization and culture, and that in those distant ages there flourished

right here in the valley of the Nile an educated priesthood, cultured society, an elaborate system of theology and a splendid and powerful form of government. The people were then far advanced in religion, architecture, painting, sculpture, philosophy, and astronomy. Oh, my dear boys, I must remain here a while longer to study and to investigate these matters."

Dick winked at Brad once more.

"We haven't observed you studying or investigating a great deal, professor," he said.

"Oh, I study far more than you suppose. I investigate by observation."

"Well, if you wish to investigate the records of former civilization, it seems to me you cannot do better than to take a trip up the Nile, along which you will see the ruins of ancient cities and temples. You should visit the ruins of Thebes, see the temple of Rameses and behold the wonders of Karnak."

"I'll have to forego that pleasure," said Zenas; "but I will not deprive you of it. You must go, boys—you shall go! I'll make arrangements for it."

But both lads positively declined, much to the vexation of the old man.

"Hum! haw!" he coughed. "I did have a vague idea that I was your guardian during this trip; but it seems that I am not."

"Would you send us away into peril?" asked Dick, with pretended resentment. "We admire you, professor—we love you, and we propose to stick by you. You can't shake us."

"Not on your life," chuckled Brad. "We're going to find out whatever your little game in Cairo is. Better tell us."

"No game at all! It's ridiculous—simply ridiculous! All right. If you won't go, I can't help it; but I may find it impossible to be with you constantly while in Cairo. Private matters may call me away from you for some days. I have met a gentleman from the United States here—a very interesting man. His name is Stringer—Colonel Erastus Stringer. He is a very fine gentleman, and I——"

"I've seen the colonel," said Merriwell. "He seems to me like a rather gay old bird. Better take care that he doesn't get you into a scrape."

"I think I am fully competent to take care of myself," said the old pedagogue, with dignity. "The colonel is a very quiet and retiring person. I do not approve of the disparaging manner in which you speak of him."

"I think the colonel is inclined to look too often on the jag pot," said Brad.

"Tut, tut, tut!" exclaimed Zenas. "Such vulgarity! Jag pot! Such slang! Bradley, you often make me blush with shame for you. I fear your travels are not doing you much good. I did hope to take you back to America quite changed and altered. I hoped to polish off your rough ways and eliminate the slang from your vocabulary. But, alas! I fear my efforts will be fruitless."

The old man then launched into a lecture, to which the boys listened wea-

riedly.

"I have given you a few things to serve as food for contemplation," Zenas concluded. "I will now retire and let you think them over."

When he was gone Dick turned to his friend, a puzzled expression on his face.

"What do you suppose the old boy is up to?" he asked.

"Hanged if I know," admitted the Texan; "but I'll be shot if I don't think there's something in the wind."

"We must find out what it is. Colonel Stringer is something of a lusher, as well as a practical joker. I hear he was put out of the Hotel Abbat, in Alexandria, on account of some sort of practical joke in which he was concerned."

There was a tap on their door and Dunbar Budthorne entered.

"What do you say, boys, to a trip to Citadel Hill to witness the sunset?" he asked. "Nadia wants to go."

"Then I'm ready," declared Buckhart, in a twinkling.

"I'll go along, too," said Dick, rising.

CHAPTER XXV—SUNSET FROM THE CITADEL

Directly across the street from the hotel were gathered forty or more Egyptian donkeys, saddled, bridled and ready for riders. These donkeys were guarded by boys, who acted both as guides and drivers when the little animals were engaged.

The moment Dick, Brad, Dunbar, and Nadia appeared on the steps of the hotel it seemed that all the boys made a rush across the street, yelling wildly and beckoning with their dusky hands.

"I got good donkey; tak' him!"

"Mine fine donkey, Teddy Rosefelt!"

"Mine best, Cha'ncey Depoo!"

"Tak' mine, G'orge Wash'ton!"

"Tak' mine, Carry Nation!"

"Well, say!" exclaimed Brad; "I'm getting some tired of being called Cha'ncey Depoo!"

Nadia laughed.

"And I'm not Carry Nation," she said.

"They are not calling us names like that," smiled Dick. "Haven't you discovered that those are the names other travelers have applied to the donkeys?"

"Oh, is that it?" said Buckhart, with apparent relief. "Why, I've happened to take the same donkey both times before, when I've not walked, and the driver kept shouting Cha'ncey Depoo, so I thought he meant me."

"He was talking to the donkey."

"Shall we take the donkeys to the hill?" asked Nadia.

"Of course we will," nodded Dunbar. "Pick your beast."

"Well, I like the looks of this boy," said the girl; "so I'll choose him."

"Girl-like," chuckled her brother, "she chooses by the looks of the boy, instead of the donkey."

Amid the confusion a man dressed in English clothes, yet with a decidedly Turkish face, came out of the hotel and stood on the steps, watching them.

Brad was assisting Nadia to mount when she saw the watching man and gasped:

"There he is again!"

"Who?" asked the surprised Texan.

"The man who has been watching me lately."

"There on the steps?"

"Yes."

"Has he been annoying you?"

"I feel sure he has been following me and watching me."

The boy from the Pan Handle country flushed and showed that he was angry.

"Wait a minute," he urged. "I'll just saunter up and inquire of the gent whatever he means."

Nadia caught his sleeve.

"Don't do that!" she whispered nervously. "Don't do it, Brad!"

"Why not?"

"I don't wish him to know that I have noticed him."

"Well, if the galoot keeps up his little game, he'll find out somebody has noticed him!"

She restrained the impulsive chap.

By this time all were ready. The boy drivers seized the chosen donkeys each by the tail, which they gave a twist, crying:

"Ah-ye, Reglay!"

Away went the little beasts, bearing their human burdens easily, while the boy drivers ran behind, clinging to the tails of the donkeys, which they seemed to

manipulate for the purpose of guiding the animals.

The manner in which the tough little donkeys bore their burdens was really wonderful. Nadia was sympathetic toward the sprightly little beasts and kept asking her driver not to make the animal go so fast.

They turned from street to street. Some of the streets were very narrow, with picturesque overhanging balconies and latticed windows. They passed several mosques, which were adorned with slender and graceful minarets. They encountered Arabs, Egyptians and Turks. They passed handsome carriages and gayly caparisoned camels.

Suddenly they came upon two barefooted, running black men, who were dressed in flowing garments and carried wands in their hands. These runners shouted out something, and waved their wands.

Immediately each donkey driver gave a twist to the tail of his animal, and the faithful little beasts turned aside to permit a handsome landau to pass. The landau contained a very dignified and very pompous Pasha, who did not even deign to waste a glance on the common infidels.

They were glared at by a number of officers, wearing handsome uniforms and displaying silver-mounted weapons. They were scowled at by an Arab soldier with a musket, mounted on the back of a dromedary.

But their travels in the East had made them accustomed to strange sights, and no expressions of wonderment escaped them. Instead, they laughed and joked among themselves.

At last they came to the hill of the citadel, where they dismounted. The donkeys and their dusky boy drivers waited at the foot of the hill, while our friends climbed toward the huge fortress which towered above the city.

This fortress was most imposing in appearance.

The professor was not there to explain how the citadel came to be built, but Dick had posted himself about it and was able to answer all of Nadia's questions. He told her how it was constructed in the seventh century by the victorious followers of the Prophet, headed by Saladin, the chivalrous foe of Richard the Lion Hearted. Saladin's architect did not hesitate to bring thither blocks of stone from the palaces and temples of old Memphis, and to raze several smaller pyramids, besides removing the polished outer stones from the larger pyramids.

"Only for that," said Dick, "it is not likely we would be able to climb the pyramids now. It robbed them of their greatest beauty."

"That was a shame!" exclaimed Nadia. "What good did the old citadel do after all?"

"It was a fine place for one of the successors to Saladin, the crafty old viceroy, Mehemet Ali, to butcher the Mamelukes."

"Oh, I've heard something about that. How did it happen?"

"It didn't happen. It was one of the most crafty and cold-blooded butcheries known in history. You know the name Mameluke signifies White Slave. The founders of the Mamelukes were originally Circassians, who had been brought into slavery in this country. They gradually became favorites, but finally turned to tyrants. They had helped Mehemet Ali to secure his position of power, but he feared and distrusted them. He finally decided it was expedient to get rid of them. So he invited them to a great banquet, to be held in the citadel. They came without suspecting his bloody and treacherous purpose. There were nearly five hundred of them, magnificently dressed and mounted. When the great gate had closed behind them, and they could not retreat, the viceroy's troops appeared on the walls and poured a withering fire on the entrapped Mamelukes. They were mowed down, men and horses, in a most horrible manner. Of all the Mamelukes only one escaped. He forced his horse to mount the heaped-up bodies of his bleeding comrades and their dying horses, and leaped the parapet, followed by a volley of bullets. In some manner he escaped untouched, although his horse fell beneath him. He fled into the desert."

Nadia gazed at the grim walls of the citadel and shuddered.

"It seems that every historic spot is stained with crime," she said.

They soon reached the top of the hill and found they were just in time to witness the glories of an Egyptian sunset.

The view from that elevation was most impressive. Below them, and near at hand, rose a great mass of delicate and graceful minarets, glittering in the last rays of the sun. The strange Oriental city huddled beyond, and then, as far as the eye could reach, wound the silver Nile, its shores on either side green with verdure.

Away to the west the sun was sinking into a violet sea of light. There lay the mighty desert, brown, barren, desolate—the desert with its dreaded sand storms and simooms.

On the edge of this desert they could see three mighty shapes, silhouetted against the sky—the Pyramids. They knew that for at least five thousand years those mysterious and marvelous monuments had been standing thus, casting their lengthening shadows across the eastern waste, as the sun sank to its nightly rest in the bosom of the desert.

Silence fell on them. They watched the sun go down, and it seemed that the orb of day had sunk in hopeless despair to rise no more. They were impressed by the mightiness of the universe, and they felt themselves mere ants amid the marvels of creation. It was a place and time to give them a just understanding of their own insignificance.

CHAPTER XXVI—SOME INTERESTING CONVERSATION

The sun was gone, blue shadows gathered, and night came stalking up from Syria and Arabia beyond the isthmus. So absorbed had our friends been by the splendid spectacle, that they had failed to give heed to their immediate surroundings.

Nadia was at Brad's side. Suddenly she clutched his arm with a nervous movement.

"What is it?" he asked, seeming to awaken from a trance.

"That man! Look there!"

She made a gesture, and he looked in the direction indicated. Standing at an angle of the wall, where the shadows were upon him, was the same man to whom she had called his attention on the steps of the hotel.

"He has followed me here!" she declared nervously.

"Oh, he has, has he?" growled the Texan, his face flushing with anger. "Well, I sure am going to interview him some, right away."

He brushed off her hand and started toward the mysterious stranger.

Immediately the unknown turned and disappeared beyond the corner of the wall.

Dick had seen the stranger, also, and he joined Buckhart at once, saying:

"Come ahead, Brad. It's time to find out if he's following us round."

Budthorne had hastened to his sister's side.

The boys ran to the point of the wall. When they reached the spot, they could see nothing of the man.

"He can't be far away," said Dick.

A few moments later they discovered the man walking hastily down the hill. Unless they chose to run after him, there was no prospect of overtaking him.

"Better let him go this time," advised Dick.

"All right," muttered the Texan; "but he is causing me to wax wroth some, and I'll give him a game of talk the next time I find him dogging us. Who do you reckon he is, pard?"

"I am unable to answer the question," admitted Dick; "but, by his appearance, he seems to be a Turk."

"That's right. I don't fancy being spied on by a Turk, just at present. We're not far enough away from Damascus. He may be one of the sultan's secret police, sent after us for that little affair in which we were recently involved."

"I thought of that myself. I'm not anxious to be arrested and carried back to Damascus."

"I should say not! That would be mighty bad business. Still, I don't think——"

Dick checked his companion with an exclamation. Another man had joined the one who was rapidly descending the hill. Both boys obtained a glimpse of this second person before both disappeared into the shadows below.

"Did you see him, Brad?" asked Dick. "Did you get a fair view of him?"

"Just a look, partner, but I swear there was something a heap familiar about him. The way he carried his head—his walk—— I've seen that galoot before."

"And so have I. Shall we attempt to overtake them? I'd give something to get a look at his face."

But they decided it was too late, as there was little chance of overtaking those men in the narrow and gloomy streets of Cairo. Besides, in order to pursue the mysterious ones, they would be compelled to abandon Nadia and her brother.

So they returned and found Dunbar and Nadia waiting, and a trifle nervous.

"It's all right," declared Dick diplomatically. "Of course, the man had a right to come up here and view the sunset. He's gone."

"I'm glad," said the girl. "But it is growing dark. Let's return to the hotel right away. I do not fancy being out in the streets of Cairo after dark."

They descended the hill and found the donkeys and the boy drivers waiting for them. Two of the boys were asleep, their hands pillowed on the bodies of their reclining donkeys.

"Poor little fellows!" murmured Nadia, sympathetically. "They should be home now. It's a shame to keep them out so late."

The boys woke up promptly on hearing the voices of their companions. Our friends mounted, and away they went, through the dim streets of the queer, old city, the boys running after the trotting donkeys and giving an occasional twist at the tails of the little beasts.

Both Dick and Brad kept a sharp lookout for possible trouble, but the return to the hotel was made without incident.

Brad lingered to talk with Dunbar and Nadia, in Budthorne's room. Not that the pleasures of a chat with Budthorne attracted him so much, but there was again a complete understanding between himself and Nadia.

Dick sought Professor Gunn, but failed to discover the old man. He then

descended to look for him below.

On the way down, the sound of laughter coming from a suite of rooms, the outer door of which was slightly ajar, attracted his attention. He had heard Zenas laugh that way before, and he knew the old pedagogue was in there.

Dick stepped to the door, lifting his hand to knock. He paused, his hand uplifted.

"He! he! he!" again sounded that well-known laugh. "A harem containing a dozen pretty girls! My! my! But you must have been a gay boy in those days, colonel."

"Well, suh," said a mellow, yet somewhat husky voice, "yo' see, suh, a man had to have some enjoyment in this infernal country. I was young, suh, and it was just after the Civil War in America. Scores of officers from the South entered the Egyptian service. Some swore nevah again to set foot on American soil. We felt that we were exiles. But we made the khedive's army spruce up wonderfully. The pay was good, and all that; but the cursed heat, the monotony, the homesickness, made us all reckless, and set us to longing fo' diversion. I'll guarantee, suh, that the most of us found our only diversions in gathering wives fo' our harems. Those boys were connoisseurs in female beauty, and the wives of many of them would have created a sensation, suh, in New York, London or Paris."

"He! he! he!" again laughed Zenas. "Oh, you rascal! Oh, you sly dog! But it must have been pleasant. What did you do with your harem when you got tired and decided to leave the Egyptian service and the country?"

"Why, I sold it, of course."

"Sold it? Sold your wives, colonel?"

"Certainly, suh. That was the proper course to pursue, professah. There were plenty of others who were ready to buy, in case you had a bargain to offah, and—as I was anxious to sell—a new recruit in the army obtained my harem fo' a mere song. Of course, I regretted to part with my beautiful wives, and especially with Fatima, my favorite; but I could not take them with me, on account of the laws of the United States, and so, suh, I kissed Fatima good-by and turned the whole lot ovah to my successor."

"Er—er—ahem! Colonel, does the custom of selling harems still continue in this country, can you say?"

"Why, certainly, suh, to a certain extent, suh. Are yo' thinking of making a purchase, suh?"

"Well, I—er—ahem!—I don't know, exactly. You see, I—I'm likely to investigate. I wouldn't mind looking a few harems over. If I found a bargain—er—ahem!—I might—— Well, you understand, colonel."

"The old reprobate!" exclaimed Dick, in a whisper. "So this is what he's up to! This is why he wants to take an excursion trip up the Nile! I think I'll have to

find a way to teach him a lesson."

"Yes, suh," said the voice of the professor's companion; "I think I understand, suh. But it is possible, professah, that you do not understand yo'self, suh. When yo' were a boy, did yo' evah trade jackknives or anything of that sort, 'unsight, unseen,' suh?"

"Why, yes, I——"

"Well, suh, that's the rule in purchasing a harem. It is the law of the country, professah, that no one save the ownah of a harem shall evah see the uncovered faces of its inmates. If yo' make a purchase, yo' have to take a chance on it. Yo' may see the ladies in advance, but yo'll not be permitted to see their faces."

"He! he!" again laughed Gunn. "That will make the game all the more fascinating. It adds an element of mystery and suspense. It piques me. If you don't mind, colonel, I'll have another nip from the decanter. I take it as a tonic, you know—merely as a tonic."

"Certainly, suh; help yo'self, suh."

"Do you think, colonel, that you might assist me in investigating a few harems?"

"Why, yes, suh, it is quite likely I might. Having an extensive acquaintance in Cairo, it will be easy fo' me to help yo'. I'll find out what harems are on the market, suh. Drink hearty, professah."

"Well, here is luck and hoping I'll strike a good bargain."

Dick did not linger longer. He returned to his room and was just in time to find Brad coming in from Budthorne's room.

"The old salamander!" cried the Texan, after listening to Dick's story. "The old Mormon! Why, he's married! He has a wife in the United States."

"Exactly."

"What does he think he's doing, anyhow?"

"He thinks he's going to have a gay time in Cairo, evidently."

"We'll have to stop it, pard."

"Oh, no!"

"What?"

"On the contrary, we'll have to help it along."

"Hey?" shouted Buckhart, aghast. "Whatever do you mean?"

"Just what I said."

"But it's a crime! It's scandalous! I'm astonished at you!"

"It's not a crime in this country to be the proprietor of a harem."

"But——"

"We're in Egypt, and the law of the land——"

"Look here, Dick Merriwell," blazed Brad, in sudden indignation. "I've generally backed you up in anything you've said or done; but, by the everlasting

Rockies, if you've become so depraved and degenerate that you can regard an affair like this as anything but a crime, I want you to understand that I think you've lost your senses!"

Dick dropped on a chair and laughed heartily.

"I mean it!" roared the Texan. "It's shameful! You hear me chirp! That doddering old chump has a wife in America! Now he wants to buy a harem in Egypt! And you're willing to aid him in his polygamous design! Waugh! Laugh! laugh! But you're not the sort of pard I took you for! This is my first disappointment in you! I'll block the old roué's game, I will! I'll spoil his scheme, or I'm not the Unbranded Maverick of the Rio Pecos!"

The Texan was greatly wrought up. He stamped up and down the room in a tempest, while Merriwell continued to laugh.

"I don't see where the joke comes in!" snarled Buckhart. "Ha, ha! Isn't it funny? I suppose you'll be in for buying a harem next? That's a fine idea! Perhaps you'll take a half interest in old Gunn's bunch of beauties? Wow! I sure am a heap disgusted!"

"Cool down a little, Brad," said Dick, still smiling. "I hardly think I'll invest in a harem. Why, you excitable longhorn, don't you know harems are not sold that way here?"

"Hey?"

"A man may purchase wives for his harem, but he can't sell the whole outfit when he gets tired of it."

"Can't?"

"Of course not."

"Then what—what——"

"The whole thing is some kind of a game."

"But you—you said you were going to help the business along."

"So I am. I want to teach the professor a lesson."

"I don't think I catch on, Dick."

"Let me tell you something."

"Fire away."

"To begin with, I don't believe Colonel Stringer ever was in the Egyptian service."

"Don't you?"

"No. He's a great bluffer. He likes to make people believe he has done wonderful things and been a gay old rascal in his day. I am satisfied that his story about having a harem once was pure fabrication."

"Mebbe you're right."

"I'm confident of it."

"What's his graft?"

"Perhaps it's graft, perhaps it's joking. It may be that he simply enjoys leading the professor on. But I have a scheme. If we can carry it out, we'll teach Zenas Gunn a lesson and have some fun on our own hook. He'll never contemplate buying another harem."

The Texan was keenly interested now.

"What's the scheme, pard?"

"If we can rig up a job with Colonel Stringer, we'll furnish a harem for the professor to purchase, and we'll give him the shock of his life."

Brad's face began to glow and his eyes to gleam. His mouth expanded in a smile.

"Mebbe that's a good idea," he nodded. "Just tell me how it can be done."

He drew up a chair and sat down near Dick. For fully thirty minutes the boys had their heads close together, talking in low tones.

At intervals Buckhart laughed heartily.

The professor came in and found them thus.

"What are you up to now, boys?" he asked. "What are you whispering about?"

"You will find out in time, professor," answered Dick.

And both lads laughed.

CHAPTER XXVII—THE PROFESSOR'S GAME

Early in the afternoon of the following day, Professor Gunn informed Dick and Brad that he was going out with a friend to inspect some ancient Egyptian relics.

"Take us with you," urged Merriwell.

"Do take us," implored Buckhart.

"We're interested in relics," said Dick.

"Mightily interested," affirmed Brad.

"No, no, boys," said the old man, holding up his hands; "I can't take you."

"Why not?" they both demanded.

"Well—er—hem!—because you have not been invited, you see. These relics are a private collection, in a private house, and it is not the privilege of the general

public to view them. I have obtained the privilege of looking them over only by great effort. It is a great concession to me on account of my standing as an educator in my own country. What I shall behold to-day will add greatly to my knowledge. I am sure I shall return, after examining the relics, a much wiser man. Hum! ha!"

"I hope you do, professor," said Dick significantly, although the old pedagogue failed to note any underlying meaning in his words.

"Yes, I hope so," put in Brad.

From their window, they watched until they saw the professor, accompanied by a small, quick-stepping man in brown, leave the hotel.

"There he goes with the colonel, pard," said Buckhart. "We've got to move lively to get there ahead of them."

"Colonel Stringer will look out for that. He'll take plenty of time in conducting the professor by a roundabout course. Come on."

They paused a moment to speak to Budthorne and Nadia, who were to remain at the hotel.

Near the hotel a close carriage of English make was waiting. They sprang in and were off. Here and there through the streets of Cairo they went, coming at last to a house in a quiet quarter.

The door of this house, set low and deep in the wall, opened for them as soon as they left the carriage.

A ruddy-faced Englishman, John Coddington by name, the Eastern agent of a London house, welcomed them as soon as they entered.

"You see I was expecting you, boys," he said. "My friend, Stringer, told me when you would be likely to arrive."

"Is everything ready?" asked Dick.

"Yes, indeed. I have a lot of prize beauties all ready for the game. Oh, they are fine ones!"

"But you must make us the champion beauties of them all," said Merriwell.

"That's whatever," chuckled Brad. "We must be the peaches of your harem."

"I'll do my best. I have a customer waiting. Follow me."

They passed through winding ways and came finally into a room where a little Frenchman waited, amid a collection of feminine garments.

"Here they are, Louis," said Coddington. "Make them into handsome girls. Show your skill."

"Make us handsome, with the exception of our faces," said Dick "Those must be as hideous as possible."

"But ze faces will be covaired by ze veils," protested Louis.

"Not all the time," smiled Dick. "Some one is going to get a peep beneath my veil."

"Mine, too," nodded Brad. "I want a mug on me that would scare a dog into a fit."

"Vera well; eet s'all be. Get redee."

"In the meantime, boys," said Coddington, "I will be on the watch for the guest who is on the outlook for a harem."

Some time later Colonel Stringer and Professor Gunn rapped at the door of the house.

They were not admitted by Coddington himself, but by a black man in flowing garments, who bowed obsequiously before the colonel and bade them follow him.

They were ushered into a large, luxuriously furnished room, with many divans and Turkish rugs, a fountain playing in the centre of the apartment, and a man in Eastern garments propped up amid some cushions, lazily smoking a hookah.

"My deah Coddington," said Stringer, hastening toward the smoker and bowing low, "delighted! Permit me to present my friend, Professor Gunn, of America."

The professor bowed after the fashion of Stringer.

"Deuced glad to know you, don't you know," drawled Coddington. "Is this the gentleman, colonel, who is looking for a harem?"

"The same, suh," nodded Stringer.

"Well, by Jove! I believe I've got the very thing he wants. I have the finest harem in the East, you know. Fourteen wives, in all, and every one a pearl. Ya-as."

"But why do you wish to sell out, sir?" questioned Gunn.

"It's become a deuced bore, don't you understand. Besides that, I must return to England soon, and I can't take my beauties with me. It would be quite scandalous there. I'd find myself arrested, don't you know. So I have to dispose of my dear little doves. It breaks my heart, but I can't do anything different. If you want a harem, professor, that outrivals anything in the East, you'll get it right here, and get it for a song, too."

Now, it is best to confess the actual truth right here. Professor Gunn had no intention of buying a harem. What the old boy wanted was to get inside a harem—to see it and get a peep at the "Eastern houris," as he had heard them called. And he took this method of getting in.

The professor was congratulating himself on his cleverness.

"Eh, eh, ahem!" coughed the old pedagogue. "I've always been somewhat shy of bargains that can be obtained for a mere song. I always favor inspecting whatever I purchase."

"Then be seated," invited Coddington, motioning toward the heaped-up cushions at his side. "Sit here, professor, and you shall see some of the sights

of the harem."

The professor hastened to deposit himself amid the cushions, chuckling inwardly over his success.

Colonel Stringer accepted a seat on the opposite side of the professed owner of the harem.

Coddington clapped his hands.

Immediately a huge black man, dressed in gaudy, barbaric clothes, his head turbaned, his feet bare, appeared from somewhere and bowed low before the Englishman.

"Bring hookahs for my visitors," said Coddington, "and bid my dancing girls appear and dance for me."

The black man bowed sweepingly again, and hastily disappeared.

Almost immediately two boys, clothed in purple, entered, bearing hookahs, which they placed before the professor and the colonel. When the visitors were ready to smoke, the boys lighted the hookahs.

"He! he!" laughed Zenas, as he puffed away. "Makes one feel decidedly kinky and chipper. I'm not much of a smoker, but I—ough! ugah! ugah! agoougah!—hah! Whew!"

He had taken some of the smoke into his lungs, and it nearly strangled him. He continued to cough for some time, but suddenly stopped and rubbed the water from his eyes.

Out upon the tiled floor before them glided a number of graceful figures, girls in diaphanous draperies, which fluttered in the air, light as azure. These girls were swaying, bending, dancing, their arms waving in the air, their feet moving swiftly to the sound of tiny, tinkling bells and the throb of a strange, unnatural music. The music was produced by a number of musicians who mysteriously appeared, seated on the floor at one side.

The faces of the girls were hidden by veils, which were bound down lightly, to keep them from fluttering aside with their swaying movements and exposing their features.

Zenas gazed and gasped.

"Great Cæsar!" he muttered. "This being the proprietor of a harem is great!"

The girls continued their dance, and to the old pedagogue every movement was full of poetry. They advanced, retreated, pirouetted, their arms waving from side to side above their heads, their heads swaying, their garments fluttering, their veils hiding their features, yet seeming to show glimpses of dark, flashing eyes beyond.

The professor forgot to smoke; he forgot to breathe; he forgot to do anything but stare.

How long the dance continued, he was unable to say, but finally Coddington

clapped his hands, and away glided the girls, as graceful as phantoms, and like phantoms they vanished.

The musicians vanished in the same silent manner.

A great sigh of regret came from Gunn.

"Well, professor," said Coddington, "how did that hit you?"

"Great!" was the enthusiastic answer. "How often do they perform?"

"Whenever I bid them. I keep them to amuse me."

"Shade of Absalom! If I owned this harem, I'd tire them out dancing. What's next on the program?"

"I will call in some of my wives."

"Were there any in that bevy?"

"Oh, no; those are nothing but dancing girls. The ladies of the harem are more select and beautiful."

"Call them! You can't hurry them too much to suit me."

"But there are certain rules to which I must conform, else I forfeit my rights. You know, the ladies of the harem never enter this room when more than one man is present. If I call them, it will be necessary for the colonel and myself to retire."

"And leave me alone with them?" gasped Zenas.

"Yes. I will send you my two favorites, the greatest beauties of the harem. I have taught them both to speak English, although they do so somewhat imperfectly, and they have picked up several expressions of which I do not approve. No matter what they say, you must understand that they are complimenting you."

"All right," said the professor, a bit doubtfully. "But are there only two?"

"Only two? How many do you want? There are plenty of them, but you understand that the two I shall send are the reigning belles of the harem. They are marvelously beautiful."

"Well, I—I don't know about being left alone," muttered the old fellow nervously. "Can't it be arranged some other way?"

"Why, I thought you might wish to be alone with them. As I have said, the colonel and I must leave the room, as no man save yourself may be present; but I can send in the dancing girls again and let them dance while you are chatting with my favorites."

"Do so, do so," urged Zenas, in relief. "That is a good idea."

"Very well. I hope you may be pleased; and do not forget that I am willing and ready to dispose of my harem at a most reasonable price. By Jove! I'll almost give the whole outfit away!"

Coddington and Stringer retired, having seen the professor take the seat of honor in the midst of the cushions.

The old man was rather nervous, but he endeavored to remain calm and dignified.

Finally a low burst of musical laughter came to his ears, causing him to brace up. A moment later, hand in hand, two persons entered the room and advanced swiftly, bowing low before the professor, their foreheads touching the tiling.

"Ah, these are the favorites!" murmured Zenas, his eyes shining. "Arise, my dears, and come here. Be seated beside me."

They needed no second invitation to sit beside the professor, however. Cooing in a coy manner, they plumped themselves down amid the cushions on either hand.

"He nice!" said one.

"Him fine!" murmured the other.

Then both giggled.

"He! he!" laughed the professor nervously, as the one on his right leaned against his shoulder. "What's your name, my dear?"

"Fraud," was the answer.

"Fraud? Well, that's an odd name! How do you happen to have such a name as that?"

"Effendi, him give it. Effendi, him husband. Him call me Little Fraud."

"Ah, I see; sort of a pet name." Then he turned to the other one, on his right. "And what is your name, darling?" he asked.

"Fake."

"Hey? Fake?"

"Sure. Effendi, him call me Big Fake."

"Well, surely he has peculiar names for his wives. Do you love Effendi?"

"Oh, so, so. Him better no husband. Much tired now. Like change."

"Well, you're frank about it, to say the least. How many times have you changed husbands?"

"Sev'teen time."

"What's that? Great Scott! Seventeen times?"

"Maybe more."

"Christopher! You've had seventeen different husbands—or more? Goodness, but that's a record!"

At this juncture, Fake threw her arms round the professor.

"You be next one?" she asked. "Like you much. You be old Lobster."

"What's that? Old Lobster?"

"Pretty name," cooed Fraud, from the other side, cuddling on his shoulder. "We like old Lobster, Fake."

"You bet your back teeth!" elegantly retorted Fake. "We like him lot. Pull his leg."

"Well, you're frank in proclaiming your intentions, at least!" gasped Zenas.

At this moment the strange music began again, and the dancing girls reap-

peared, posing and pirouetting, the tiny bells on their bare ankles tinkling in a lively manner.

Zenas tried to untangle himself from the twining arms of the two favorites, but they declined to be thrust aside.

"No! no!" they cried. "Keep so. Like it, old Lobster."

"Old Lobster!" grated Gunn. "Say, my dears, you'll please me if you call me something else. I don't like the name you have selected for me."

"No like it?" questioned Fake, in apparent surprise. "Pretty name."

"Sweet name," gurgled Fraud. "We like it."

"But I object! You'll have to call me something else. I won't stand for it."

"All right," said Fraud, in apparent disappointment.

Then she tried to get a strangle hold on Zenas, who was beginning to perspire and wish himself a thousand miles away.

"Well, you have a mighty queer notion about pretty names!" snapped the old man. "Don't choke me! Those dancing girls are laughing—I know they are! I can see them laughing behind their veils!"

But they clung to him more closely than ever, and all his squirming was useless.

"Where's the boss of this house?" he spluttered. "Be careful, both of you! I'm a respectable married man!"

"Nobody ever think it," snickered Fraud.

"You be married lots more when you get us," observed Fake.

"Christopher! I should say so! I'd be too much married."

"We not all you have," said Fraud. "You get lots more like us."

"Only not so nice—not so pretty," declared Fake.

"Well, I'll have to think this thing over before I close the bargain. I'm beginning to think that one wife is enough for any man—too much in some cases."

"How silly!" commented Fake.

"Awful chump," said Fraud.

"But we love him," purred Fake. "Him old. Him not last long. Then we have 'nother husband."

"That fun," giggled Fraud.

"Say, you're beginning to make me sick!" snapped the distressed victim. "Call the boss of the house—call him! He can keep his harem!"

"You nervous," said Fake. "See girls dance. Be still."

"I see them," groaned Gunn, "and they see us. They're making sport of us! I didn't come here to be laughed at! I won't stand it."

"No stand—sit still," advised Fraud.

He gave over his efforts and fell to watching the dancers. They were very graceful, but he remembered that Coddington had spoken carelessly of them,

declaring that the favorites of the harem were far more beautiful. To Zenas it seemed that the so-called favorites were big, husky ladies, while their free-and-easy manners, and their slang, filled him with aversion. He had fancied the beauties of a harem to be something entirely different from the ones who were boldly embracing him. And one of them had confessed that she had changed husbands sixteen times—or more! This in a land where he had supposed a man could have a number of wives, but that no wife ever had more than one husband.

The glamour of the harem was fast wearing off, as far as Zenas Gunn, of Fardale, was concerned. Already he was beginning to think he had seen quite enough of it.

Fake and Fraud were not inclined to keep still long. The former began to dally with the professor's whiskers, running her fingers through them and pulling them playfully.

"Pretty! pretty!" she cooed.

"Ba-a-a-a!" bleated Fraud, like a goat. "Wind go z-z-z-z-z."

"Quit your fooling!" half snarled the fretted old fellow, pushing Fake's hand away.

Her gloved fingers seemed to catch in his whiskers and give them a fearful yank, as he thrust her hand aside.

He howled with pain.

"Nice hair," commented Fraud, giving a pull at the professor's wig and jerking it off. "Oh, see! Hair all loose! He look funny now!"

"Gimme that!" panted the professor, snatching at the wig; but Fraud thrust it back of her, laughing mockingly behind her heavy veil.

She was strong, astonishingly strong. He found he could not recover the wig by force, so he gave over the attempt.

"That nice," said Fake. "Behave, old Lobster. Pretty teeth. Bite Fake's little finger."

Before he even suspected her purpose she thrust her finger into his mouth. In some manner she caught hold of his upper set of false teeth and jerked them out.

Then both favorites uttered exclamations of seeming surprise and merriment, while the triumphant Fake held the extracted set of teeth above her head.

"Him fine!" she cried. "Hair come off! Teeth come out! Old Lobster lots funny!"

"We take old Lobster all to pieces," said Fraud. "Come on, Fake. Take him eyes out next."

"Hold on, both of you!" frothed Zenas. "Don't you dare carry thish thing any farsher! Gimme my wig! Gimme me my teesh! Hand 'em over, or shomebody going to get hurt!"

By this time he was greatly enraged, but he found himself almost helpless in the hands of the favorites.

The dancing girls were continuing their gyrations, but he knew they were laughing.

He felt that he had been robbed of his dignity and humiliated, and he was eager to take flight from the harem. Again and again he sought to struggle up, but Fake and Fraud pulled him back and held him.

"Oh, good old Lobster!" they cooed. "We love old Lobster. Him great joke."

"I demand to be released!" gasped the professor. "If you hang onto me you'll regret it! I'm a desperate man! I'm dangerous!"

He had managed to recover his teeth and thrust them back into his mouth, and now Fraud sought to mollify him by restoring his wig, which she placed on his head, hind side foremost.

"If this is what the owner of a harem has to endure, I'm thankful I don't own one," declared Zenas.

Then they patted his cheeks and sought in various ways to pacify him.

"We like you," they protested.

"Well, you both have hanged queer ways of showing your affection, that's all I've got to say!" he retorted.

"Maybe old Lobster like to kiss me?" questioned Fraud.

"No; old Lobster like to kiss me," declared Fake.

"Who told you so much?" sneered Gunn.

"We say so, old Lobster have to kiss us," asserted Fake.

"Have to?" gasped the perspiring pedagogue. "Why should I?"

"That rule," explained Fraud. "We want it, no man get away less he do so."

A groan of genuine distress escaped the lips of Zenas.

"I'm sure you don't want it," he hastened to say. "Just call Mr. Coddington. I'm very ill! I must see a physician at once! Please let me off!"

But they were obdurate, both insisting on receiving a kiss from him.

"It's foolishness," he declared. "You have veils on."

"Oh, we move um," Fake hastened to say.

"We move um," echoed Fraud.

"And then will you call the boss of the house?"

"We have him called then," they promised.

"If this ever gets out, my reputation is blasted," sighed the professor; "but I see no other way to escape from these creatures. I'll have to submit."

He signified his willingness, whereupon both favorites again clasped him about the neck with an arm, while they prepared to lift their veils with their free hands.

"Here goes!" he muttered, turning to Fraud.

She lifted her veil.

A squawk of astonishment and horror burst from Professor Gunn, for Fraud was black as midnight, with huge red lips, which were parted in a horrible grin. Brass rings dangled from her ears and her nose.

"Heavens and earth deliver me!" panted the professor.

Then he turned and saw the face of Fake. It was that of an old, haglike creature, wrinkled and hideous, while her mouth was filled with horrible black teeth.

A shriek escaped the old man. Like a maniac he tore himself free from their clutches.

"Help! Murder!" he yelled.

"Come back, old Lobster!" they implored.

But he scrambled to his feet and fled from the room, yelling for assistance at every step, and pursued by a burst of laughter from the dancing girls.

The professor rushed from the room and into the arms of John Coddington and Colonel Stringer. They grasped him and held fast.

"Let go!" he shouted. "Don't let those creatures catch me! Let go!"

"Well, by Jove!" drawled Coddington. "The man is crazy, don't you know!"

"What's the matter with yo', professah?" asked the colonel, in apparent amazement. "Have yo' lost your senses, suh?"

"How dare you insult the favorites of the harem by running away from them in such a manner?" sternly demanded the Englishman.

"Insult them!" snarled Zenas, glaring at Coddington as if he longed to throttle the man. "How dare you insult me by putting such hideous hags onto me?"

"Hideous hags? Sir, those are the most beautiful ladies in all Cairo, by Jove!"

"Beautiful! They would frighten a mummy into a fit! They would give a dog hydrophobia."

"Suh," said Colonel Stringer, "I am astonished, suh! My friend Coddington is a fine judge of feminine beauty."

"Bah!" sneered Zenas. "Bah! bah! I've seen his beauties, and they are horrible things! Let me get out of this house! I wish never to see the interior of another harem! A man who would have more than one wife is insane. And a man who thinks such creatures as those beautiful ought to be locked fast in a home for incurable imbeciles! You're an imbecile, Coddington—that's my opinion of you! Don't talk back! Don't open your mouth! Want to sell your harem, do you? I don't wonder! You ought to pay somebody about ten million dollars to take it—and then he'd get stuck! Good day, sir! I tell you not to attempt to detain me a moment! I am going now!"

And go he did, hurrying forth from the house with trembling steps and almost running until he was far from that vicinity.

Barely had the professor left the front door when the two "favorites" appeared, both convulsed with laughter.

They were Dick Merriwell and Brad Buckhart, the former having posed as Fraud, while the latter had given his name as Fake.

"Oh, great horn spoon!" gasped Buckhart, "I certain won't get over this in a year!"

"I think the professor has been taught a splendid lesson," laughed Dick. "The game worked like a charm."

"I should say it did!" agreed Coddington, who was also laughing. "We watched it all. We were behind some curtains, and we dodged out just in time to get ahead of the professor when he took flight. It was deucedly funny, don't you know. You boys did your parts very cleverly."

"Did you see Dick remove the professor's wig?" laughed the Texan. "I thought I'd blow up then, but it gave me an idea, and I managed to get my digits into his mouth and yank out the upper layer of his store teeth."

"And then I was on the point of blowing up," confessed Dick. "But the professor was so excited he didn't notice it."

"The climax came when yo' invited him to kiss yo'," grinned Colonel Stringer. "He'll be ready to shoot me now."

"Don't you think it," said Dick. "He'll be round begging you to keep still about it. He'll be humble enough."

"We're very much obliged to you, Mr. Coddington, for your assistance," said Dick. "If you'll give us a bill of expenses, I'll settle it. If Colonel Stringer hadn't known you, I fear we could not have carried out the plan after we formed it."

"Oh, the expense was nothing compared with the sport I've had," asserted the Englishman.

"But you had to engage the dancing girls."

"They are professionals, and their services cost a mere nothing. It's not worth mentioning."

"Oh, yes it is. Then there was the costumer. You had to pay him. I insist on settling the bill."

Coddington did his best to get out of taking anything, but Dick was obdurate and finally compelled the Englishman to state the full expense of the affair, which he paid.

It was nearly an hour later when the boys reappeared at the Shepherd's Hotel, having washed off their make-ups and donned their usual attire.

They found the professor, looking pale and wan, pacing the floor of his room, which adjoined theirs. The old man noted their entrance, and paused to peer at them suspiciously.

"Where have you been, boys?" he asked.

"Oh, out for a little airing," answered Dick, carelessly. "Did you enjoy the afternoon, professor?"

"Well—er—ah—I can't truthfully say that I did," confessed the old pedagogue.

"That was too bad. Why didn't you enjoy it?"

"Ahem! I can't explain, boys. Don't ask foolish questions."

"But didn't you see that collection of old relics?"

"I did—I saw it!"

"And you were disappointed in it?"

"Very much so."

"Were not the relics very ancient?"

"Well, two of them were, beyond question."

"And did the inspection of them add greatly to your fund of knowledge?" persisted Dick.

"Greatly," declared Zenas. "I know much more than I did when I left this hotel."

"Then I fail to understand why you seem so terribly disappointed. You said you expected to return here a much wiser man."

"And if I'm not wiser," said the professor, "I ought to be shot, that's all! I have this day learned something I'll never forget. Don't ask another question! I decline to discuss the matter further. But I will say that no man is too old to learn, and sometimes a man who thinks himself very wise discovers that he's a big fool. I'm going to lie down and rest now, for I need it. I am quite exhausted."

He closed the door between the two rooms.

"I must tell Dunbar and Nadia about it," chuckled Buckhart. "Come on, Dick; let's go see them."

"You go ahead," nodded Merriwell. "I have a letter to write, and I think I'll do it now."

Buckhart was not gone long, and there was something of a worried look on his face when he returned.

"Well, did they appreciate the joke?" questioned Dick, without looking up.

"I didn' tell them."

"Didn't?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"They're not in."

"Oh, that's it! Where have they gone?"

"I don't know. I inquired and found they left the hotel about two hours ago. They did not take a carriage, or even engage donkeys. They walked out, without stating whither they intended to go."

"Well, it's likely they'll return soon."

"I hope so."

Buckhart's tone caused Dick to look up quickly.

"What's the matter, Brad?" he asked.

"I'm worried, pard," confessed the Texan.

"About them? Oh, nonsense; they're all right."

"They may be; but you know Budthorne is a mighty poor protector for a girl, and Nadia has been watched by that strange man we observed."

"That is, she thought that man was watching her; but she was not sure of it."

"She was pretty sure. He was a Turk, and you know what happened to her in Damascus."

"Which, therefore, will not happen again. Don't be foolish, old man."

"You remember that other man—the one we saw join the Turk on Citadel Hill?"

"Yes."

"I dreamed about him last night, Dick."

"Did you?"

"Sure; and it was a bad dream. I thought you and I were walking along a dark street, in a strange city, when that other man came up behind us suddenly. I turned just in time to see him drive a knife into your back, but not in time to check him. You fell! Then I sprang on your murderer and flung him to the ground. I had him by the throat and I dragged him to a corner, where there was a light. When I had pulled him into the light I discovered that he was Chester Arlington."

"Well, you see how foolish dreams are, Brad. Chet Arlington is at Fardale, thousands of miles away."

"That's all right. I don't opine the chap we saw was Arlington; but somehow I have the idea that he's an enemy to you, and just as dangerous an enemy as Chet Arlington."

"If you take stock in dreams, you'll be calling on fortune tellers, next."

"Oh, you laugh! You wait and see! That dream meant something."

Brad relapsed into silence, and Dick went on with his writing.

Ten minutes later they heard the sound of running feet on the stairs and outside their door. The door was burst open, and Dunbar Budthorne, ghastly white and shaking in every limb, reeled in.

Buckhart made a great leap and seized the fellow.

"For Heaven's sake, Budthorne, what has happened?" he hoarsely demanded.

"Nadia!" gasped the agitated young man, seeming barely able to utter the word.

"Nadia!" grated Brad. "Something has happened to her? Speak, man!"

"We were walking——"

"Go on!"

"Suddenly several men sprang out on us. They tried to seize Nadia. I—I did my best. I sought to protect her. One fellow snatched her from me. Another hit me on the head and knocked me down. But I saw the one who seized her—saw him face to face! I knew him. It was Miguel Bunol!"

Brad fell back as if struck in the face. Dick uttered an exclamation of incredulity.

"You're crazy, Budthorne!" he palpitated. "Your eyes deceived you! Bunol cannot be here, for the Bedouins carried him away to sell him into slavery in Arabia."

"I don't care about that," declared Budthorne, positively; "Bunol was with those men who attacked us—he seized Nadia. I know him! I cannot be deceived!"

"But Nadia," questioned Brad; "what became of her?"

"I was stunned for the time," said Dunbar. "When I recovered the men were gone and she had disappeared. I ran about aimlessly, but something guided me to the river. I saw them in a boat that was rowing off to a small yacht. I saw them lift my sister from the boat over the rail into the yacht. Steam was up. The yacht hoisted anchor and away it went up the river. All this time I was running up and down the bank, trying to hire some one to take me off to the yacht in a boat. No one would. And when the yacht was far up the river I turned and came back here as fast as I could. Oh, Nadia—poor Nadia! How can we save her?"

CHAPTER XXVIII—IN BUNOL'S POWER

A small but handsome private yacht, under full head of steam, was making its swift course up the Nile.

In the tiny, Orientally furnished cabin of this yacht, Miguel Bunol stood with his feet wide apart, his hands in his pockets, puffing at a cigarette and triumphantly regarding a cowering, pale-faced, red-eyed girl.

Bunol's manner was insolent and self-satisfied in the extreme. He felt that

he was master of the situation at last and his heart beat high with exultation.

Nadia glanced at him in terror. She had crept as far from him as possible.

"I am greatly sorry to cause you such vast distress," said the young Spaniard, with pretended regret.

Her lips curled.

"You, sorry!" she exclaimed chokingly.

"No doubt you do not believe me, but it is true, my dear—I swear it is true."

Her eyes began to flash.

"You know you are lying, you monster!"

"At least," he retorted, with a dark smile, "your spirit is not broken, and I like that. You made such a terrible disturbance, and you did weep so much that I feared you would not have any spirit left. I admire the girl of spirit, and for the one who cows and whimpers, like a whipped puppy, I have but little regard."

She was silent, but scorn and loathing continued to gleam in her eyes.

"I regret to the exceeding limit that we felt it necessary to pursue the course we did, but we dared not wait longer."

"We? You mean yourself."

"There is another concerned."

"What other?"

"My friend, Medjid Bey. He is the owner of this yacht."

"A Turk! A worthy comrade!"

"Medjid Bey is a Turkish gentleman of high rank. He stands high in the regard of the sultan."

"I am glad to know the name of your accomplice in this dastardly piece of business."

"Oh, you will know him far better before this affair is over. He is a splendid fellow. Only for that, at this moment you might be under arrest, and on your way back to Damascus, or to Constantinople."

She betrayed her total disbelief in the words of Bunol.

"I give you the assurance of a gentleman that I speak the truth," he bowed.

"The assurance of a gentleman!" she exclaimed. "A fine gentleman! A gambler, a scheming scoundrel!"

"You misjudge me greatly, Nadia. You have never understood me. From the first I took a friendly interest in your brother. I knew his weaknesses, and I tried——"

"You tried to ruin him! You got him into your power by drugging him. The drug you gave him made him the slave of drink, and you did not permit its effect to wear off. When it seemed about to wear off, you gave him more of the drug. Friendly interest! You were making him a drunkard!"

"It is useless to argue with a girl. Women do not reason. What they believe

they believe, without sense or judgment."

"I believe what I know. You had Dunbar in your grip, in London. Since then he has never been himself. His spirit is broken and his courage gone."

"Surely he lacks courage, else he would not have deserted you to-day. He ran away in the most cowardly manner when we appeared. It was our intention to take him along with you. I thought you would feel better about it if you had him for company."

Nadia felt a twinge of shame for her brother, who had displayed the white feather in the most pitiful manner.

The account of the affair, as given by Budthorne to Merriwell and Buckhart, was true with the single exception of Dunbar's statement that he had defended Nadia until struck down. This part of the story he had founded on Dick's experience in defense of the girl in Damascus. His befuddled and unimaginable brain had been incapable of devising a different yarn.

"No wonder he fears you, Miguel Bunol!" panted the girl. "He has every reason to fear you."

"That is no excuse for his cowardly conduct. No brave man ever deserts a lady in time of peril."

"Perhaps you think yourself competent to judge a brave man?" she sneered. "Perhaps you really believe yourself brave?"

"I know what I am! but, with your brother concerned, I wish to make no unpleasant comparisons."

"How kind of you! You are such a gallant gentleman!"

Her scorn was scorching, but he declined to be touched by it. Coolly he lighted a fresh cigarette.

"Where is the master of this boat?" she suddenly demanded, half starting up. "I demand to see him!"

"All in good time, my dear. You shall see him soon."

"Now! He must listen to me! He must explain his conduct! You have deceived him! You have lied to him! He cannot realize what he is doing!"

"You are wholly mistaken, I assure you. Medjid Bey understands quite perfectly what he is doing."

"It is unlawful! It is a crime!"

"He has learned of a certain crime that was lately committed in Damascus."

"You mean——"

"I speak of the murder of Hafsa Pasha, a countryman of Medjid Bey."

"How does that concern me?"

"You know you are concerned. In Damascus it is said an American adventuress ensnared Hafsa Pasha, and her friends killed him."

"Which is a wretched story to hide the truth that Hafsa Pasha brutally seized

and imprisoned an American girl. The story is told to shield the Pasha in case the affair should be too closely investigated."

"Perhaps so; but you know by experience that the people of Damascus believe it, for you were compelled to flee from the city in disguise to escape the enraged Moslems. Had you fallen into the hands of that mob you would have been torn limb from limb."

"Still you—fine gentleman that you are—threatened to deliver me over, and, to prevent you, Dick Merriwell and Brad Buckhart seized, bound and gagged you and fastened you in a closet of the German hotel!"

"My dear Nadia, I had no thought of permitting you to fall into the hands of the mob; but I did wish to bring those fool boys to terms by frightening them."

"You found them boys you could not frighten."

"They are young idiots! They do not know enough to be afraid!"

"You followed us after we escaped from the city."

"And overtook you, too, aided by the Bedouins I engaged."

"You did not overtake Dunbar and me."

"But I did overtake Merriwell, Buckhart and that old fool professor."

"Yes. Then you had Dick Merriwell stripped and were on the point of having him cruelly whipped. You threatened to have him sold into slavery in Arabia."

"Which would have been his fate only for the unlucky appearance of that old devil of a sheik, Ras al Had. He turned up with his followers at the wrong moment."

"At the right moment!" cried Nadia. "The whipping you intended for Merriwell you received yourself."

Bunol's face flushed.

"Yes," he said, in a low, fierce tone. "The scars are on my back, and I shall bear them to the grave."

"Retribution!"

"The end is not yet. I have sworn to make Merriwell suffer, even as I suffered!"

"That shows your true nature and the blackness of your heart, for it was not Dick Merriwell that caused you to be whipped. Ras al Had was the one. Dick interfered, or you would have been lashed until you fainted."

"Why did he interfere? I know! It was because he feared I would be so weakened by the punishment that I would not be able to stand the journey to Arabia. He left me with those Bedouins, who were commanded to take me out of Syria and sell me into slavery in Arabia. He intended that I should perish a wretched slave of black men."

"Which was the fate you had chosen for him and would have forced on him, only for the fortunate coming of the sheik. Do you never think that there is such

a thing as retributive justice? I shuddered and was sorry for you when I learned what had happened. But now—now my only regret is that you escaped!"

"Well, I did escape, and I am here—to wreak vengeance on Merriwell!"

"And it was Ras al Had who commanded the Bedouins to carry you into captivity, not Merriwell. Merriwell did not know of the sheik's order until he was far away and it was impossible for him to do anything."

"He has told you that, but he lied! He urged old Ras al Had to do it! I know him, for did he not try to murder me in the tent of the Bedouin chief?"

"When you had goaded him beyond endurance by your taunts and your threats of whipping and slavery. You thought he would not touch you, because he has wonderful command of his temper; but you found out your mistake when he fastened his hands on your throat."

"He told you of that? He boasted of it?"

"Never a word of it have I received from him. Brad Buckhart told me."

"That fellow? Well, what I have in store for him is only second to what shall befall Merriwell. I was not carried into captivity. I am here, and I have struck a blow. The end will come soon."

"How you escaped I do not know, but——"

"I will tell you. I know many Turks of influence. I have had dealings with the Turkish secret police, and——"

"Through your lies the secret police compelled Dick, Brad and Professor Gunn to leave Constantinople," interrupted Nadia.

The Spaniard smiled in a satisfied manner.

"I think the information I furnished led to their being warned to leave the city," he bowed. "Let me go on. Knowing a number of Turkish gentlemen of rank, I was able to impress old Ali Beha, the chief of the Bedouins, who had been commanded to sell me into slavery. I saw my only hope was to bribe and frighten the ignorant old chief into releasing me. That was no simple matter, for Ali Beha feared the sheik, Ras al Had. However, all the wires I worked as best I knew how. I talked to Ali Beha and told him how, if my Turkish friends ever learned what had happened, they would be furious and seek to have him punished. I told him that Ras al Had was now an outcast, having slain Hafsa Pasha. I told him he was aiding the accomplices of Ras al Had to escape, which would enrage the sultan when he learned what had taken place. I offered bribes and made promises. Ali Beha seemed immovable, and I was in despair.

"Think of me, a helpless captive, believing I was doomed to slavery in burning Arabia! The thought of such a fate maddened me. I nearly lost my reason. At times I raved and prayed. But through it all I kept saying I would live to be revenged on Dick Merriwell."

"It was the fate you first devised for him," said the girl, "and your suffering

was your punishment."

Bunol snapped his fingers.

"Whenever I recovered from those fits of despair," he continued, "something seemed to whisper in my ear that there was yet hope and that I would not become a slave. I did not know Ali Beha had sent two of his men on fleet horses to Damascus to investigate my statements; but this was what he had done. He waited for those men to return. They came back in time, and they informed him that it was true that Ras al Had had become an outcast, having slain Hafsa Pasha on account of an old score. They also told the sheik that they had found I was known to the Turks I had claimed as my friends.

"Then Ali Beha's manner toward me underwent a change. I was no longer a captive. He escorted me to the nearest village and set me free. From that village I made all haste to reach the port of Akka, believing Merriwell would take flight from Syria as soon as he could. I did hope he would be detained; but at Akka I soon discovered he had found a way to get off in a steamer for Alexandria. Fortunately for him, news travels slowly in Syria, and the officials had not learned that he was suspected of having something to do with the murder of Hafsa Pasha. Either that was the case, or the Turks, knowing he had not really committed the crime, were willing that he should get away. The latter supposition may be the truth. I confess that I am half inclined to so regard it. Later I will explain why.

"Well, I followed to Alexandria, and from that port I traced Merriwell to Cairo. Arriving at Cairo, I met Medjid Bey. He had been cruising in his own yacht, on which we now are. It happened that I had met Medjid Bey before in Syria, where I did him a special favor, which he had not forgotten. I lost no time in telling him all that had happened in Syria. He was interested. I could not keep watch of you and your friends without running great risks of detection. He agreed to watch you."

"And he is the man who annoyed me so much!"

"Exactly, my dear. He informed me that you had observed him and grown suspicious of him. While he was watching you we had sent word to Damascus that Merriwell and Buckhart, the two American boys who were present when Hafsa Pasha was slain, had been located in Cairo. We waited for Turkish officials to come to arrest them.

"But I found Merriwell was growing restless. I feared he would somehow learn that I was near. In case he did so learn, it was likely he would take flight. I have had some experience in following him, and I know he is most baffling. He vanishes like a shadow, and he seems to leave no track behind. Besides, my dear, I did not mean to lose you again. Then I finally induced Medjid Bey to carry out a little scheme at the first opportunity. The opportunity came to-day, while you were out walking with your brother. We seized you, and it was our intention to

take your brother also, but he fled. Now you know why you are brought here."

"I don't know!" cried Nadia passionately. "I don't understand! What can you hope to accomplish?"

"I can keep Merriwell from taking flight. He will follow you. In Cairo it is dangerous to strike; but in the wild country up the Nile I shall be able to wreak vengeance on him. The very fact that no officers were sent to arrest him made me determine to strike the blow myself. The officers might have reached here ere this, and so I reason that the Turkish government is glad to have him out of the country."

Nadia regarded the man with increased loathing and hatred.

"In the end you will meet your just deserts!" she cried.

"In the end I will have you, and the enemies I hate shall be swept from the face of the earth. Somewhere up this river the end of the struggle must come. After that, you and I will hasten away to some better land. Your brother shall be spared, and we'll take him with us. In time you will learn to admire the man who never rested until he had crushed his enemies."

"Admire you? You are insane to fancy such a thing! I despise you! I loathe you! To me you are like a venomous serpent! Had I ever entertained for you a spark of pity, you have quenched it. Where is this man Medjid Bey? Let me talk to him."

"As you like," said Bunol, lifting his eyebrows and shrugging his shoulders. "It will give you no satisfaction. I will send him here."

Bowing gracefully, he retired from the cabin.

After a moment Nadia started up, a wild light in her eyes. She faltered a bit, then swiftly crossed to leave the cabin. The man she had so often seen watching her in Cairo entered and blocked her path.

"You—you are Medjid Bey?" she breathed.

"That is my name, lady."

"You own this yacht?"

"The *Kayala* is mine."

"Do you know what you are doing?"

"I think so."

"You are committing a crime! I have never harmed you. I am a helpless girl. You look like a gentleman. I appeal to your manhood, your honor! Before it is too late, turn back and set me free. Have no part in this wicked deed. Bunol has lied to you. He has led you to think he has been wronged. It is false! He is a scoundrel of the blackest dye, and he has committed all the wrongs. My brother is back there in Cairo. He will be distracted. My friends are there. They will be pained. Take me back—please take me back! I beg—I entreat——"

She fell on her knees, seeking to clasp his hands.

"My dear lady, I beg you rise. It pains me to see you thus distressed."

"You will listen? You will take me back to my friends?"

"I will take it into consideration. In the meantime do not fear for your personal safety. No harm shall befall you while you are on the *Kayala*. I give you my word. Do nothing rash, but wait and trust."

He was anxious to get away, and he bowed low once more, hastening from the cabin.

Nadia fell at full length on the floor.

"Heaven protect me!" she moaned. "He will do nothing, and I am in the power of Miguel Bunol!"

CHAPTER XXIX—THE PURSUIT ON THE RIVER

It was night in Egypt. The silver moonlight fell on the shining, silent Nile, its low shores lined with shadowy palms. Up the Nile a small excursion steamer was spluttering and throbbing, showing its lights.

It was a strange and unusual hour for a steamer to be moving on that portion of the Nile, where but few steamers are ever seen. Traffic on this river is carried on mainly with the aid of *dahabeahs*, which are immense combined sail and row boats, having a low forward deck and a large cabin aft.

Forward, near the pilot house of the little excursion steamer, there were a number of persons. They were conversing in low tones and keeping a sharp outlook ahead and on either side.

Dick, Brad, Professor Gunn, and Dunbar Budthorne were there. There were also two others in the party, and these were Colonel Stringer and John Coddington.

"There's a deep shadow over yonder in the bend of the river, pard," said Buckhart, in a low tone. "They may be lying in there somewhere."

Immediately Dick turned to the man at the wheel and gave an order. The course of the steamer was changed and she headed toward the shadow that lay in the bend of the river. The pilot ran as near as he dared, on account of the shallowness of the water. He then informed Dick that they could not go in farther.

"I think it is near enough," said the boy. "We can see now. There's no yacht lying in there."

The pilot declared it impossible that a small yacht should lie hidden from their view anywhere in the shadowy space, and Dick told him to head up the river again and get into the channel, from which both shores could be watched.

In order to make sure they did not pass the yacht for which they were searching, it was necessary at times for the steamer to make a sinuous, winding course from side to side, the river being wide in many places.

This steamer was one of two excursion boats which made trips from Cairo far up the river to the ruins of ancient Thebes and other spots of historic interest.

Dick Merriwell had lost little time after learning from Dunbar Budthorne that Nadia had been carried up the river in the private yacht of the strange Turk. He formed his plans rapidly and went to work.

The first thing was to decide on some method of pursuit, and he quickly concluded that they must follow in a yacht or steamer.

No yacht could be secured, and so he sought for a steamer. One of the boats was up the river. The other, and smaller one, had just returned from a trip and was advertised to leave again in two days.

Dick had no small difficulty in finding the captain, but this he finally accomplished. The captain was a Swede. At first he seemed to think the American boy was crazy, but it did not take Richard Merriwell long to convince that Swede of his sanity and earnestness.

The captain stated that he must have a sum representing nearly a hundred dollars a day for the use of his boat. Dick agreed to pay it. The captain grinned and asked him where he was going to get so much money.

Then the American lad flashed a purse, the clinking sound of its contents causing the eyes of the Swede to glitter.

"How much advance money do you demand?" asked Dick.

The captain said he would require two days' pay.

"And then you will be ready to start——"

"It's night now," said the Swede. "Ay be rady to start in mornang."

"You must be ready to start in just sixty minutes," said Dick.

"Ay can't do it."

"If you are ready to start in sixty minutes I'll pay you this amount extra."

The boy laid down four pieces of money.

"Ay be rady," said the captain, taking up the money.

In the meantime Professor Gunn had met and told Colonel Stringer, and the colonel had carried the story to his English friend, Coddington. These men were eager to join in the pursuit of Nadia's captors. They were on hand when Dick and Brad appeared and announced the securing of the steamer.

"My dear Coddington," said the colonel, "the prospect of a little fighting makes my blood stir. Are yo' armed, suh?"

"I have my pistol, don't you know," answered the Englishman.

"Very good, suh. I have two pistols, and I can use them both. We'll make it red-hot fo' this Spaniard and his Turkish friend, if we evah catch them."

"But I'm afraid we'll never catch them," said Coddington. "This steamer the boy has secured is a slow old tub."

"We'll overtake them if we have to pursue them clean up to Lake Victoria Nyanza," declared Dick grimly. "I don't see why they turned up the river, if they wish to get away."

"That's what puzzled me up a plenty, pard," put in Buckhart. "Mebbe Budthorne made a mistake; mebbe the Turk's yacht went down the river."

But Budthorne insisted that he had made no mistake, and so, when they had boarded the excursion steamer and found everything ready for the start, they headed toward the upper waters of the Nile.

"Look there!"

"Where?"

The exclamation and the question were spoken in a whisper. Dick uttered the first; the second came from several of his companions.

"Close to the shore in that cove yonder."

"What do you see?"

"Looks like the black hulk of a boat in the shadow of those thick palms."

"It sure does look that way!" palpitated Buckhart.

"But it may be one of these river boats, don't you know," said Coddington. "They find many places where they swing in to the shore and tie up."

"She shows no light," said Colonel Stringer.

Dick spoke to the pilot.

"Can you run in there?" he asked. "We think we see a boat near the shore."

The pilot explained that the river was quite deep there, such current as there was being thrown near the bank by its winding course. He sounded the bell for half speed and the steamer glided toward the deep shadows.

Professor Gunn was very nervous.

"We must be near the site of old Memphis," he said. "The ruins are covered by a great palm grove, and you can see plenty of palms there, on the shore."

But the others were watching the small, dark hulk that lay near the shore close under the shadow of the palms, through which the light from the low-lying moon sifted in spots.

"Whoever is on board there, they ought to know we're coming," growled Buckhart, disgusted by the fuss made by the little steamer, which was snorting and wheezing in a manner to be heard afar in the wonderful silence of that Egyptian

night.

"I think some one is stirring, don't you know," said Coddington. "I fancied I saw something move."

Dick had fancied the same. To him it seemed as if some dark figures left the steamer and slipped away into the gloom of the palms. Once something like a muffled cry came out across the water, but the wheezing of the steamer prevented them from hearing it distinctly. Even though it were a cry of some sort, they knew it might come from a night bird or a prowling wild beast amid the ruins of the ancient city.

Suddenly and unexpectedly a bar of light shot out from the black hulk near the shore. It struck in their faces, dazzling and blinding them.

Involuntarily they half crouched, while several of them reached for their weapons.

"A searchlight!" exclaimed Dick. "We've found the yacht! Look out for trouble!"

"There sure is liable to be some shooting!" breathed Buckhart; "and we're mighty fine targets here in this light. Look out for bullets!"

Then a voice hailed them. Some one called to them in Turkish. It was a challenge, although they did not understand the words.

"Talk English," cried Dick. "We don't understand that lingo."

"No, we don't savvy it any at all," said Buckhart.

"Are you trying to collide with me?" demanded a voice from behind the searchlight. "Keep off!"

"He savvys United States all right," said Brad, in deep satisfaction. "Now we can powwow with him."

The captain of the steamer gave a signal for the engineer to reverse his engines.

"Who are you?" demanded Dick.

"What right have you to ask?" was the indignant retort.

"We take the right. Better answer."

"I am a peaceful individual seeking to get some sleep. Why do you come pounding in here with your noisy old boat and disturb my rest?"

"He's a whole lot saucy," growled the Texan.

"We are looking for a private yacht, owned by a Turkish gentleman," explained Dick.

"A Turkish gentleman—not!" muttered Buckhart.

"You are friends?" was the inquiry from behind the source of the light.

"Not exactly; but we have important business with the gentleman."

"What's his name?"

"What's your name?"

Dick was talking to give the captain time to bring the steamer alongside the yacht, which was no simple task under the circumstances.

Evidently the unknown did not fancy Dick's manner of speech, for he again commanded them to keep off.

"If you touch my boat you will mar her," he said. "I don't know you. You may be scoundrels, robbers, assassins."

"We're looking for some scoundrels," said the Texan, in a low tone; "and I certain reckon we've found them. Get ready to board that boat, and be prepared to fight."

"I warn you to keep off!" angrily shouted the voice of the unseen man. "We'll have to defend ourselves."

"If you're on the level," said Dick, "you have nothing to fear from us; but we are determined to make an investigation and find out who and what you are."

"We may fire on you."

"Better not."

"We can. You are in the light, while it is impossible for you to see us."

"If you do any shooting, you'll regret it."

During this "game of talk" the pilot was manipulating the steamer as skillfully as possible, the bell tinkling nervously and frequently in the engine room.

Dick felt something touch his leg and glanced down. Dunbar Budthorne, agitated and cowering, was crouching on his knees in the shadow of the rail at the boy's feet.

"Get up!" muttered Dick, in a low tone. "Don't let them see they have frightened anybody. We must bluff this thing through."

"They may begin shooting any moment," chattered the cowering fellow. "If they do, they can pick us all off easily. You'll be the first one killed, too, for Bunol thirsts for your blood."

Not another one of the group had sought shelter. Colonel Stringer, his gray mustache bristling, was standing erect with his shoulders squared toward the enemy, while John Coddington was planted near, his hands on his hips. Buckhart was close to the rail, his square jaw set, fire in his eyes. The professor, inspired by the others, had not betrayed any alarm, although Dick fancied he was ready to drop and seek shelter the instant any trouble began.

In the very forefront was Merriwell.

The enemy seemed in doubt, and while they hesitated the steamer bumped against the side of the yacht.

The moment the two boats touched Dick and Brad were on the jump. The searchlight no longer bore on them. They leaped to the rail and went over it. From the steamer they sprang to the deck of the yacht.

Colonel Stringer followed, only he was somewhat more cautious. He was a

moment ahead of Coddington.

Dick had a pistol in his hand when his feet struck the deck of the yacht. Buckhart also had drawn a weapon.

They found themselves confronted by two men, both of whom seemed unarmed.

"Is this the way peaceable persons behave?" asked a cuttingly sarcastic voice. "You have boarded my yacht in defiance of my wishes, and, if my eyes do not deceive me in this light, you have weapons in your hands."

"We shall not use our weapons unless you force us to use them," said Dick. "Have no fear of that."

"Under the circumstances," said the stranger, "you must confess that you have given us great provocation. We should have been justified in firing on you as you drew near, for your movements have been hostile all along."

"I reckon there was a right good reason why you did no shooting," put in Brad.

"And that reason was—what?"

"You didn't dare."

"Oh, but any man has a right to defend himself and his property. You are wrong in thinking we did not dare. What had we to fear?"

"The row it would raise if you did fire on us. You bet your boots shooting of that sort would have kicked up a rumpus."

"Your logic is poor. However, I do not intend arguing with you. Now that you are here, be good enough to state your business instantly. As soon as possible I wish you to retire."

"I presume you haven't the least idea of the nature of our business?" said Dick sarcastically.

"Not the least, I assure you."

"Where is Miguel Bunol?"

"Who is that?"

"Miguel Bunol."

"You will pardon me, but I fear I have not the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance."

"You are a Turk?"

"Yes."

"You own this yacht?"

"Yes."

"You are the man so often seen watching our party in Cairo."

"I think you must be mistaken. I do not seem to remember you. However, if you will step forward a little, I'll have the searchlight turned on you. I may be able to recognize you then."

"Trick, pard!" hissed the Texan. "At close range they may begin the shooting if they get us into the light."

"Wait a minute," invited Stringer. "Let me say something, if yo' please."

Then he addressed the owner of the yacht.

"Suh," he said, "I am Stringer, suh, Colonel Weatherby Stringer, at one time of the khedive's army. I am visiting Egypt again after a lapse of some years, suh, but I assure yo' I have friends of power and influence in Cairo and Alexandria. In case harm comes to me, suh, the whole affair will be investigated, and yo' will find yo'self the sufferer if yo' are in any degree at fault. That's all I have to say, suh. Now go ahead and use your old searchlight as much as yo' like."

This was the little man's defiance.

"Perhaps you may not know me?" broke in the Englishman. "I am John Coddington, and I have a large business interest in Cairo. If I should happen to get shot to-night, I assure you, don't you know, that it would be a very serious matter for any one who did the shooting."

The stranger bowed.

"It happened, gentlemen," he said, "that I fancied I recognized you both when the searchlight was turned on your boat."

That seemed to explain why no shooting had been done. The presence of Stringer and Coddington had held the enemy in check.

The enemy? Were these two men the only ones on the yacht? Surely not. Our friends knew there must be more, but where were they?

"Now," said Dick, "as we are beginning to understand each other, we will inform you further that we are looking for a Spaniard by the name of Miguel Bunol. It is known that he proceeded up the river on the private yacht of a Turkish gentleman. I hardly fancy there is another such yacht on this part of the river."

"And so you think this man you seek must be on board my boat?"

"Exactly."

"He is not."

"Do you deny that he has been? Do you deny that he brought a young girl on board this yacht against her will?"

The owner of the yacht laughed disdainfully.

"Deny it?" he exclaimed. "Of course I do!"

"Then you lie!" shouted a voice, as Dunbar Budthorne came leaping from the steamer to the yacht and rushed forward to confront the cool Turk. "I saw her brought on board! This is the yacht! She is here! Search the boat!"

CHAPTER XXX—HIS JUST DESERTS

The Turk did not shrink before Budthorne. He remained unruffled as he said:

"Very well; search the boat, gentlemen. As I know two of you to be responsible, you have my permission to look the yacht over from stem to stern."

"It's a bluff!" growled Buckhart.

But in his heart Dick was beginning to fear that neither Nadia nor Bunol would be found on the yacht.

Budthorne was greatly wrought up, and he urged the others to come on.

The Turk spoke to his companion, who stepped aside and disappeared.

A moment later lights flashed up all over the yacht.

The Turk stood smiling in the light of an electric lantern, his manner indicating his confidence in the result of the impending search.

The lights showed two men forward, where they had been standing in the shadow of the pilot house.

They were the pilot and engineer. One was a Greek and the other an Armenian.

"Are these all of your crew?" demanded John Coddington.

"Yes, sir."

Now that the lights were on, Professor Gunn came crawling cautiously over the rail onto the deck of the yacht, to which the steamer had been made fast.

"Hum! ha!" he coughed. "I must see that nothing is neglected. Proceed with the search, gentlemen."

Medjid Bey, the owner of the yacht, lighted a Turkish cigarette and puffed away with indifference as the boarders began searching the yacht.

It did not take long to search the small, but elegant craft from one end to the other, and not a trace of Nadia or Bunol was found.

Budthorne was infuriated. He seemed almost deranged.

"What have they done with her?" he cried. "What have they done with my sister?"

Brad and Dick held a consultation in low tones.

"We're tricked, pard," said the Texan. "The Spanish snake and the dirty Turk have fooled us. What can we do? They've carried Nadia off. I'm for taking that Mohammedan varmint by the throat and squeezing the truth out of him."

"I'm afraid we can't get at the truth that way," said Dick. "It is a bad piece of business."

"Bad! Pard, if that Spaniard harms a hair of Nadia's head I'll skin him alive! You hear me warble! I'll kill him by inches!"

Dick walked toward the stern of the yacht, which had swung quite close to the shore. Indeed, not more than twelve or fourteen feet of water lay between that end of the yacht and the bank, showing that the water was very deep there.

Merriwell stood looking into the shadows of the palm grove, feeling desperate and baffled. Suddenly in the gloom of the grove there was a red spout of fire.

The report of a pistol startled the peaceful night. Dick Merriwell dropped on the deck of the yacht. A roar of fury burst from the lips of Brad Buckhart. With two great leaps he reached the rail of the yacht and perched on it. Then he uprose and flung himself forward in a spring for the bank.

He cleared the space and landed on the shore. Recklessly he charged into the palm grove, a pistol in his hand. The Texan believed his comrade had been shot down in a dastardly manner, and his heart was filled with a mad longing for vengeance.

He ran toward the spot where the flash of the weapon had been seen. Through a dim bit of moonlight ahead of him a figure seemed to flit. That glimpse was enough for the Texan. He flung up his hand and his pistol barked twice.

"Give me a fair look at ye, and I'll certain get ye!" he panted.

He came to some ruined steps of stone and stumbled down them, losing his footing and falling sprawling at the foot. But he was up in a moment, and again he fancied he caught a glimpse of a flitting form.

Crack! Once more he fired.

"Bet I nipped him then!" he snarled.

He continued the mad pursuit, little reckoning what might happen, thinking only that he might reach the person who had shot down his friend and wreak vengeance for the dastardly act.

Suddenly right ahead of him the red fire spouted and a singing bullet brushed his ear. At the same moment Brad struck his foot against a broken column of marble which had been unearthed from the ruins and went headlong to the earth.

It must have seemed that he had been dropped by the bullet. At any rate, with a cry of satisfaction, a man leaped up and came at him.

Buckhart rose to his knees. He had dropped his revolver, else he could have shot the other. As it was, the man flung himself on the Texan, hurling him backward to the earth.

"I have you," snarled a voice, "and when I am done both my enemies will be dead and out of the way!"

It was the voice of Bunol!

It was now a hand-to-hand struggle for life or death, amid the palms which grew above the buried city of Memphis. What little moonlight sifted through and fell upon the combatants simply served to make the desperate struggle seem all the more terrible.

Although taken thus at a disadvantage, Buckhart was a fighter every inch of him, and he was not immediately overcome by the murderous Spaniard.

Bunol had flung his whole weight on the Texan, and Brad's head struck against a block of stone, causing him to see stars; yet the American lad clutched the wrist of his antagonist and held fast.

It was well he did so, for the Spaniard had drawn a knife, and this he was trying hard to use.

Bunol cursed in Spanish. He twisted and squirmed, seeking to free his hand. He was astonished at the strength of Buckhart, for he believed the Texan had been brought down by a bullet and was sorely wounded.

"You die hard, American dog!" he panted; "but die you shall!"

"Not by your hand, you varmint!" retorted Brad.

"Oh, I'll kill you yet!"

The Texan was gathering his strength, and suddenly there was an upheaval, Bunol being unable to pin the husky chap to the ground. Snarling like a mad dog, the Spaniard writhed in an eellike effort to escape from the clutch that continued to render his knife hand helpless.

Powerful though he was, Buckhart felt his hold slipping. There was perspiration on Bunol's wrist and on the Texan's fingers. The task of maintaining that grip grew more and more difficult.

Still Buckhart realized that it was possible his life depended on his success in clinging to the fellow's wrist.

Suddenly Bunol snapped his hand free.

"Now," he snarled; "now I kill you!"

But, even as he struck, Buckhart sent him backward with a surge, and the keen blade merely slashed the sleeve of the American lad.

Brad fancied he knew just where he had dropped his pistol, and he hastily felt round for the weapon.

"Let me get it," he growled, "and I'll make a sieve of that cur!"

He was given little time to search. Bunol recovered quickly. He saw the

other feeling about on the ground. Crouching, he half rose and launched himself at Brad.

The boy from the Pan Handle country, however, was on the alert, and, with equal swiftness, he sprang aside.

The Spaniard missed his intended victim, but the knife in his fingers struck fire from a stone, on which it was broken near the hilt.

A snarl of dismay escaped the lips of the murderous wretch.

Then Buckhart grappled with him again.

Brad did not know the knife was broken, so he made a grab at Miguel's wrist to prevent him from slashing.

"Whoop!" came from the lips of the Texan. "This sure is the real thing in the way of a scrimmage. It's a right long time since I've been in one like this."

Bunol cursed bitterly. At last he realized that his antagonist could not be seriously wounded. Although he did his best to break away, the American lad hurled him down and held him.

One of Brad's hands found Miguel's throat.

"Got ye now!" he grated triumphantly. "Tell me where you have taken Nadia! Speak quick, or you'll never have the chance to speak at all!"

"Go ahead!" gasped the helpless scoundrel. "Kill me! Kill me, and you'll never set eyes on her again!"

"Where is she?"

"You can't force me to tell."

The fingers on the throat of the Spaniard tightened. Bunol's breath hissed in his throat and then stopped.

"I certain am not in a fooling mood," said Brad, "and it's up to you to talk plenty fast."

Bunol could not talk then, and he could do nothing but gasp when the crushing hold was relaxed.

"I'll give you about twenty seconds to begin unloading your mind," said Brad. "Time is flying a heap. Ten seconds gone! Fifteen seconds! Time's up!"

The cry that Bunol started to utter was cut short by the pressure once more applied to his throat.

Then a figure came flitting through the shadows, dark as night and silent as a phantom. It sped to the spot and was on Buckhart before the Texan realized that another was present.

The boy was hurled aside. He had been attacked by a huge black man.

This fellow flung Buckhart from Bunol and pinned him to the ground, a knee on his breast.

Gaspingly the Spaniard rose.

"Hold him, Kahireh!" he gasped. "Don't let him get away! Where is your

knife? Let me have it quick!"

His hands fumbled in the girdle of the black man. A moment later he uttered a cry of satisfaction. A bit of moonlight that came through the palms fell on the blade of a long knife that gleamed in the Spaniard's hands.

"Hold him still, Kahireh!" grated Miguel. "Now I will cut his throat!"

Never had Brad Buckhart been nearer death than at that moment, for Miguel Bunol really meant to make his words good. He intended to cut the throat of the helpless boy, who was held for slaughter by the powerful black man.

But Brad's time had not come.

Out of the near-by shadows leaped still another figure. Bunol was bowled over with a kick. Then the heavy butt of a pistol fell on the head of the black man, who pitched forward across the Texan.

"Brad! Brad!" called a voice that was filled with anxiety; "are you all right?"

Then the strong hands of his dearest friend on earth pulled Buckhart from beneath the stunned giant.

"Pard," gasped the Texan, in joyous bewilderment, "is it you? Why, I certain reckoned you were dead a heap! I saw the flash and saw you fall on the deck of the yacht."

"But I saw a moving shadow in the grove and dropped just in time to escape being shot in my tracks," said Dick. "Are you hurt?"

"None at all. But where is that varmint Bunol? Only for this other galoot I'd choked the truth out of him or finished him. Where is he? There—there he goes!"

Bunol had taken flight, running as fast as possible through the grove. Instantly both lads were off in pursuit, determined not to let the scoundrel give them the slip.

"Shoot, pard!" urged Buckhart. "He may slip us if you don't!"

"And I may kill him if I do. I want to force him to tell where we may find Nadia."

"Better kill him than to let him get away," panted Brad. "If I had my gun——"

Crack! Dick fired.

There was a cry of pain ahead of them, and they saw the fleeing figure fall.

"Nailed him, Dick!" exulted Brad. "That's the ticket! That was the way to stop him!"

In truth, Merriwell had brought the fleeing Spaniard down with a single shot. In a moment they reached the fellow, who was lying on the ground, alternately cursing and groaning.

As they came up, Bunol lifted himself on his left elbow. His right hand went back. A shaft of moonlight gleamed on something in his hand.

The Texan uttered a warning cry.

Dick Merriwell dropped as if shot, and for the second time that night he did so barely in time to escape death at the hand of his bitter enemy.

The huge knife Bunol had taken from the black man whistled through the air, barely missing Merriwell as he fell.

Then Buckhart pounced on the young scoundrel.

"You dog!" grated Brad. "I sure will cook you this trip!"

But Dick interfered a moment later, checking the fury of the boy from the Pan Handle country, and preventing him from injuring the Spaniard further.

"Go ahead!" whimpered Miguel, in a way that seemed quite unusual for him. "You may as well finish the job! You have smashed my knee, and I'll bleed to death, anyhow!"

"I must have hit him in the leg," said Dick. "I fired low."

Buckhart struck a match and Dick made a hasty examination, questioning the wounded rascal. He found that Bunol had been wounded in the knee and was bleeding profusely. With his pocketknife Merriwell quickly cut away Miguel's trousers and exposed the wound.

The Spaniard lifted the upper part of his body and looked at his bloody knee. A groan escaped him, and then he began to sob. All the nerve had been taken out of him.

Dick quickly cut a strip from the lower part of Bunol's trousers leg, twisted it like a rope, tied it round the fellow's leg above the knee, inserted his pistol barrel through the loop and began to twist, thus tightening the manufactured cord until it began to cut into the flesh and checked the flow of blood.

In the meantime Brad had been questioning Bunol about Nadia, and the cowered wretch confessed that she was hidden close at hand in a portion of an excavated temple and still guarded by one of the two black men.

A distant call startled the boys. When the call was repeated they recognized it as coming from some of their friends, and they answered it.

Soon Colonel Stringer, Coddington, the professor, and Budthorne came hastening through the palm grove. As they approached, they saw a man dodging away. They ordered him to stop, but this resulted in his fleeing still more swiftly, and he quickly disappeared.

Then the colonel declared he heard a low cry, not far away. The Texan joined them, declaring Bunol had confessed that Nadia was near by. They began searching, and soon they came upon the mouth of an excavation, one of many such, made by scientists in uncovering the ruins of old Memphis.

From the depths of this opening Nadia answered his call. In a reckless, headstrong manner, the Texan let himself down into the opening, released all holds and slid to the bottom.

"Here she is!" he shouted, in delighted satisfaction. "She's all right! Hooray!

Whoop! Whoop-ee! Get a rope from the steamer and yank us out."

Medjid Bey gave an order to his engineer immediately after our friends left the yacht for the shore. The engineer hastened to get up steam. This was not such a difficult task, as the fires had been kept in a condition that would enable them to move with very little delay.

The Turk leaned on the rail of his yacht and listened to every sound that came from the palm forest. Finally he spoke to the Greek, who had lingered near his master's side.

"Cast off from that steamer," he said. "Do so quietly. Don't attract attention."

Thus it happened that the captain of the steamer was surprised some moments later to discover that the yacht was floating clear of his boat. He sang out to Medjid Bey, but the Turk made no answer.

A sound of moving machinery and puffing steam came from the yacht. The anchor was hoisted, the yacht swung round.

"It's no fight of mine," muttered the captain of the steamer, in Swedish. "Let him go. I've earned my money."

When our friends reappeared on the shore, accompanied by Nadia and bearing the wounded Spaniard, they discovered that the yacht was rapidly disappearing into the silver mist, far down the placid Nile.

On the return trip to Cairo Nadia told how Bunol and Medjid Bey had discovered the approaching of the steamer long before it arrived in the vicinity of the yacht. The Spaniard was confident pursuers were coming. He wished to fight them from the yacht, but the Turk objected.

"Then put me ashore," said Bunol. "Give me the girl and those two Nubians to take care of her. If they board your yacht, light up and keep away from them. I'm going to kill one of my enemies to-night. I'll fire from the shore."

And so it happened that Nadia was dragged ashore and thrust into the excavation, the black men being left to guard her. One of them left the other, seeking to render Bunol assistance in the encounter with Buckhart; but Dick appeared in the nick of time. Finally the other took flight, and Nadia was found, exhausted and hysterical after her fearful experience, but otherwise unharmed.

When Cairo was finally reached Miguel Bunol was ghastly white and limp from the loss of blood and pain he had endured. Dick lost no time in getting the fellow into a hospital.

In the morning Merriwell visited his enemy. He wore a very sober face on returning to the Shepherd's Hotel.

"Is he dead?" asked Brad.

"No; but he may not recover. His right leg has been amputated above the knee."

“Well, I opine he’s got what was his just due,” said the Texan.

THE END.

BURT L. STANDISH

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